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THE CHILDREN'S

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FABLES IN VERSE.





Frontispiece.



Hen^r Corbould del.

Geo Corbould sculp

The Wolf & the Lamb.

London, Published by G. & W.B. Whittaker, 23 Ave Maria Lane.

FABLES IN VERSE:

FROM

ÆSOP, LA FONTAINE,

AND OTHERS.

BY MARY ANNE DAVIS.

Second Edition.

ENLARGED BY SEVERAL ADDITIONAL FABLES,
AND A FEW MORAL TALES.

LONDON:

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ADVERTISEMENT.



THE first impression of these Fables having been sold long ago, and the work having since been frequently inquired for, the author is induced to publish a second Edition, with a few additional Fables. She has also added, from the similarity of their style and tendency, some Moral Tales. These she had intended should form part of a separate volume; but as it is uncertain whether she may carry her design into execution, she here offers them to her young friends, in the humble hope, that the

lessons they inculcate may be the means of forming principles of right conduct in their hearts, and she may thus, in some degree, contribute towards rendering them virtuous, beloved, and happy.

The additions to the present edition commence with the Fable of The Boys and the Frogs, page 140.

Frome, February, 1819.

TO THE CHILDREN

OF THE MOST HONOURABLE

THE MARQUESS AND MARCHIONESS OF BATH,

THIS LITTLE VOLUME,

BY PERMISSION OF THEIR NOBLE MOTHER,

IS RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY THEIR HUMBLE AND DEVOTED SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.



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F A B L E S.

FABLE I.

INTRODUCTORY.

The Power of Fables.

FABLES were held in days of yore
A vehicle for moral lore,
And still maintain their ancient right
To blend instruction with delight :
Truth is their theme, in fiction dress'd,
Morality their aim profess'd ;
And though brute beasts the scene engage,
Men are the object of their page.

In Athens once their power was felt —
Athens, where Wit and Learning dwelt.

The great Demosthenes, whose name
Stands foremost in the lists of Fame,
Seeing at stake his country's weal,
Mounted the rostrum, full of zeal,

His fellow citizens to warm,
And all their slumbering pride alarm.
Great were the dangers of the state !
Philip, their foe, was at the gate !—

In vain his eloquence was spent ;
The people were on pleasure bent ;
Engaged in idle sport, his fire
Roused in their breasts no warlike ire :
As well might he, as oft before,
Harangue old Ocean from the shore.

Observing this, he changed his own,
And caught from them a playful tone.

“ Once on a time,” continued he,
(Then first he touch’d the magic key)
“ A swallow, Ceres, and an Eel,
A journey took with right good will.
At length, a river stopp’d their course —
The Swallow had an apt resource,
Her wings convey’d her swiftly o’er :
The Eel by swimming gain’d the shore.”

“ And what did Ceres ?” cried aloud
The curious and impatient crowd.

Indignant, thus resumed the sage :
“ Ceres would glow with shame and rage,
That, when I to her people plead
Their freedom’s cause, not one will heed ;

Yet, while they scorn a theme of glory,
Can idly listen to a story."

A fable thus attention caught,
Which eloquence in vain had sought.
He fix'd their minds ; his aim pursued ;
They heard — and Philip was subdued.

FABLE II.

THE OLD MOUSE AND THE YOUNG MOUSE.



The necessity in Youth of attending to Parental Advice.

LET not the young, in folly bold,
Contemn the counsels of the old,
Or dare, with self-sufficient pride,
Parental caution to deride.

'Tis not for those of tender age
To boast the wisdom of the sage ;
'Tis not for youth, whose bent is play,
To walk in none but Wisdom's way ;
Nor, when with mirth and frolic crown'd,
To be for judgment most renown'd.
The want of these is no disgrace,
If modesty supply the place,
And lead the duteous child to prize
Their counsel, who can best advise.

Shall he, o'er whose respected head
So many summer suns have fled ;
Whose eye, with mild expression fraught,
Beams with intelligence and thought ;

Whose language is the voice of Truth—
Shall he be deem'd the foe of youth?
O view in him your worthiest friend;
To his instructions meekly bend;
When dangers threaten, ills betide,
Let his experience be your guide:
So shall your footsteps 'scape the snare
That Arrogance and Folly share.

A pert young Mouse, just come from school,
A flippant consequential fool,—
Who thought all wisdom was comprised
In music, which she idolized;
In murdering French, and daubing paper;
In minuet step, and sprightly caper,—
One day besought her doting mother,
To let her see this place, and t'other:
She wish'd, for once, to have her will;
For, treated like a baby still,
She ne'er should venture forth alone,
Till she were quite a woman grown.

At first, the Dame her suit refused,
Said, to the world she was unused;
That Vice too frequently was seen
Array'd in Virtue's garb and mien;

And it required a skilful eye,
The vile deception to descry :
That Wisdom's self was oft rejected,
Where Ignorance went unsuspected :
How could so young, untaught a creature,
Detect the mask, expose the feature,
When e'en the wisest were deceived,
When Folly laugh'd, and Merit grieved ?

“ Fear not for me,” the daughter cried :
“ Have I not sense myself to guide ?
Since first my eyes beheld the day,
Has not discernment mark'd my way ?
At school, did any girl, like me,
So quickly learn her A, B, C ?
Practise her steps with such a grace ?
Keep time so well, or patterns trace ?
And shall I spoil my eyes with reading,
And set with work my fingers bleeding,
When I may future ages brighten,
And with my wit my sex enlighten ?
Too long secluded have I been ;
I want to see, and to be seen.”

“ Go, then,” the indulgent mother said :
“ But, pray, with caution look and tread ;
And, ere your friendship you bestow,
Learn to distinguish friend from foe.”

Away the Mouse delighted flew,
Without a guide, the world to view ;
Wondering that any could dispute
Her judgment clear, and wit acute.

But scarcely had the fleeting sand,
Or dial's sure revolving hand,
Another hour unerring traced,
Than back she came in breathless haste.

“ O, tell me,” said the affrighted dame,
“ What you have seen, and whence you came ?
What makes you look so pale and wild ?
Speak, I conjure you, speak, my child !”

Soon as the youthful Mouse regain'd
Her breath and speech, she thus explain'd :

“ O ! I have seen the strangest creature,
That e'er existed, sure, in nature !
With such a fierce and savage look,
As scarce the stoutest heart could brook !
Upon two legs the monster stood,
While on his head, deep tinged, like blood,
A scallop'd piece of flesh there grew,
Beneath his throat another too.
His arms he flapp'd against his side,
And, opening then his mouth so wide,
I thought he meant, detested sinner,
Straight to devour me for his dinner.

Forth from his pointed beak there came
A hideous roar, that shook my frame,
And made me haste, with might and main,
Back to your peaceful cot again.

“ Before this monster came in view,
Near me a lovely creature drew :
Her coat was deck’d with many a streak
Of black and gray, her aspect meek ;
And, as her graceful tail she waved,
What heart could fail to be enslaved ?
On me at length her eyes she bent,
And crouch’d, as if with kind intent
My friendship humbly to implore :
But, ere I could discover more,
My ears were by the monster greeted,
And all her gentle views defeated.”

“ My child,” the trembling parent said,
“ You fill my inmost heart with dread !
Great is the danger you have pass’d ;
Thank Heaven, that you are safe at last !
Yet he, who caused you such alarm,
Was a poor bird, who meant no harm ;
And she, who lured you with her grace,
The bitter foe of all our race—
A Cat ; who, ’neath those specious airs,
To Mice a deadly hatred bears,

Subsists entirely on our breed,
And every year makes thousands bleed."

This fable, penn'd in ancient days,
Another moral truth conveys:
That, wiser if we wish to grow,
We ne'er must judge by outward show

FABLE III.

THE CROW AND THE PITCHER.



Difficulties conquered by Perseverance.

How oft we hear the young complain,

“ My task is hard, my study vain !

No lesson, that I ever saw,

Could make amends for kite, or taw.

To drive the hoop, or shuttlecock,

Is easier far, than *hic, hæc, hoc*.

No charms in Virgil can I see ;

And what's old Homer, pray, to me,

That I should thus perplex my brains,

And lose my pastime for my pains ?

I cannot learn ; 'tis time misspent ;

I ne'er was for a scholar meant.”

Unthinking boy ! your words recall ;

An instant check your bounding ball ;

Your trundling hoop awhile suspend,

And listen to your zealous friend.

Though hard, at first, your Latin seem,

And harder still your Greek, or theme,

Be not dismay'd ; the willing mind,
Like virtue, its reward will find :
No difficulty can accrue,
But patient study may subdue ;
And, as you till her classic soil,
Fair Science will repay your toil.

Nor yet in Learning's path alone
Be steady perseverance shown :
In every thing you undertake,
Bright eminence your object make ;
Be highest excellence your aim :
Rest not content with moderate fame.
When obstacles your way impede,
Think well, nor easily recede :
Should one means fail, another try ;
With ceaseless energy apply : —
Then, like the bird of whom you read,
As you deserve, you'll gain the meed.

'Twas summer ; not a cloud was seen,
And Nature's robe, of lovely green,
Changed to a sun-burnt, russet hue,
Proclaim'd the want of freshening dew :
It seem'd as though the scorching rays
Would set creation in a blaze.

'The silver brook, and purling stream,
Had wasted in the solar beam ;
The cattle, anxiously dispersed,
Sought to allay their raging thirst,
Or, gasping, through the livelong day
Beneath the shade desponding lay.

Too weak to soar with rapid wing,
And seek afar some genial spring,
A Crow the common evil shared,
And like her earth-born neighbours fared.
But not desponding, for she knew
Despair would make one evil two ;
She cast her anxious eyes around : —
“ Succour, perchance, may yet be found,”
She said : and, as she spoke, espied
A Pitcher, near the path-way side.
How it came there, or why 'twas left,
Whether by negligence, or theft,
To us it matters not to know,
And little cared the thirsty Crow.
Suffice it, that she straight descended,
Thinking her troubles now were ended.
But, ah ! what anguish did she feel,
Scarce equall'd by the torturing wheel,
When, as she reach'd the circling rim,
She found no water kiss the brim !

The vase was deep, the water low,
Beyond the reach of Goody Crow,
Who stretch'd her glossy neck in vain,
The crystal beverage to obtain.

She was a bird, above her kind,
Of active and reflecting mind :
When difficulties cross'd her way,
She scorn'd, with vulgar birds, to say,
“ It *can't* be done :” but ponder'd o'er
Each likely means ; call'd in her store
Of mental and corporeal aid,
Of pain or labour not afraid.
She did not, like the silly clown,
When in the mire his cart was thrown,
Exclaim, “ God help me !” bend a leg,
And ne'er attempt to stir a peg ;
But set her shoulder to the wheel,
Trusting to industry and zeal :
And, if she found her labour lost,
Her mind was but the more engross'd :
Necessity, Invention's dame,
Led her a new device to frame,
On surer means her hopes to found,
Till just success her efforts crown'd.

Close to the road, to mend the way,
In little heaps some pebbles lay :

These in her beak the Crow convey'd,
(Arduous the task she thus essay'd !)
And, with unwearied pains, at last,
Into the half-fill'd Pitcher cast.
As one by one the pebbles fell,
(Who can her heart-felt rapture tell ?)
The water rose, by slow degrees,
Till the poor Crow could drink with ease.

Pleasure is sweeter after pain : —
O how she drinks, and drinks again !
Her thirst allay'd, a sprightly wing
She lifts, and seems to say, or sing :

“ The mind's resources are not known,
Till on their best exertions thrown ;
Necessity must call them forth,
And Perseverance stamps their worth.”

FABLE IV.

THE SUN AND THE WIND.

—
More to be gained by mild than harsh Treatment.

THEIR maxims I could ne'er endure,
Who think harsh measures will procure
The mind's obedience and esteem,
Preserve affection, or redeem.

Kindness, and that alone, can bind
Affection, fugitive as wind ;
Can make the stubborn soul relent,
By every softening impulse bent.

Thus wax resists the polish'd gem,
Till melted by a genial flame.
What beauteous figures then we trace !
A Tully's head ! Apollo's grace !
While elegant devices prove
Emblems of friendship, truth, or love.

'Twixt Sun and Wind, in ancient days,
A contest rose,—so Æsop says.

High ran the subject of debate,
As if provoked by deadly hate :
But, no ; the question of the hour
Was simply, which had greatest power.

“ Do you,” the blustering Wind exclaim’d,
“ Pretend to vie with one so famed ?
Do I not make the forest bend,
And by the roots its pride up-rend ?
Does not my power, which you revile,
Level in dust the stately pile ?
Drag Ocean from his coral cell ?
Make billows into mountains swell ?
And send, while help in vain they crave,
Whole navies to a watery grave ?”

“ True,” said the Sun, “ the powers you wield
Are vast, but still to mine must yield.
My influence bids the seasons roll,
And guides and animates the whole :
With light and heat I crown the year ;
Both man and beast alike I cheer :
I bid the opening flowers expand ;
I scatter plenty o’er the land ;
And every various good dispense,
That glads the heart, or charms the sense.
Without my life-inspiring aid,
Whole worlds would sicken, Nature fade ;

And Earth, the abode of man, become
A ghastly scene, a living tomb."

While thus each disputant contends,
And sturdily his claim defends,
It chanced, a traveller pass'd that way,
Whose road across the desert lay.
Shelter, or refuge, there was none ;
A cloak was o'er his shoulders thrown,
And this his sole defence, we're told,
From storms by day, and nightly cold.

Soon as this traveller they espied,
" Let him," said they, " the point decide :
Words nothing prove ; we still contest ;
Each thinks his own opinion best :
On him alternately we'll try
Our separate strength ; facts cannot lie ;
And be his claim without revoke,
Who from the traveller wrests his cloak."

The Wind commenced the attack, and blew
As fierce a blast as man e'er knew.
It took the traveller unprepared,
One of his arms its fury bared ;
But he again resumed the vest,
And clasp'd it firmly to his breast.

At this, the Wind infuriate raged,
And all his forces straight engaged,

From every point. Each blast that blows,
To win the prize, its aid bestows.
Scarcely could now the traveller stand ;
Soon darkness overspreads the land,
While thunder, lightning, hail, and rain,
Sever the clouds, and drench the plain.

The Wind his utmost strength had tried ;
The traveller still his power defied ;
His cloak, amid the deafening roar,
He hugg'd far closer than before.

The Wind retired. To prove his worth,
The Sun his gentle rays sent forth.
The clouds disperse ; the sky anew
Puts on a robe of azure blue.
Beauteous alike the scene below :
All nature feels a vivid glow ;
By more than magical effect,
The bushes are with pearls bedeck'd ;
The plain is dress'd in livelier green ;
The beasts in grateful sport are seen ;
The flowers emit a rich perfume ;
Their cheerful notes the birds resume :
The traveller hails the friendly ray,
And jocundly pursues his way.

Phœbus now darts his hottest beams :
The traveller pants, his visage streams ;

His loosen'd cloak he throws aside,
Which but promotes the copious tide.
At length, unable to proceed,
So much the heat his steps impede,
Looking in vain for umbrage round,
He spreads his cloak upon the ground,
On it his weary limbs extends, —
And thus the important contest ends.

“ Learn hence,” the victor Phœbus cried,
(To men the moral be applied)
“ That gentle means will oft obtain
What force and fury ne'er can gain.”

FABLE V.

THE FOX AND THE STORK.



On the incautious Use of Wit.

A DANGEROUS talent oft is wit,
Unless with sense to govern it.
How many (thoughtless fools at best !)
Had rather lose their friend, than jest ;
And find, for want of proper guard,
Humiliation their reward !

Do you possess a sportive vein ?
Seek not to give another pain.
On fun and frolic are you bent ?
Still let your mirth be innocent.
This object ever keep in view,
That others laugh as well as you ;
And let good humour be the zest,
That serves to heighten every jest.
A teasing turn of mind is hated,
And all its ridicule ill-fated.

A Fox, who ranged the forest round,
For wisdom less than wit renown'd,
Who deem'd himself a knowing blade,
And oft on animals had play'd
Some roguery, in which his aim
Was the low sport of making game,
Once, in his turn, a trick was shown,
That sadly changed his waggish tone.

A Stork, good-humour'd, harmless bird,
Who solid sense to wit preferr'd,
Who ne'er was known to be obtrusive,
Pert in reply, much less abusive,
Reynard esteem'd an object fit
On whom to exercise his wit ;
And, as he did not *flash* and *bounce*,
Vainly mistook him for a dunce.

To dinner he this Stork invited ;
The invitation was not slighted,
True to the appointed hour he came ;
(And every guest should do the same.)

The well-bred salutation pass'd,
How each had fared since they met last ;
The weather and the news discuss'd,
How the late rain had laid the dust ;
Of their acquaintance who was dead,
Who had been sick, or who had wed :

Dinner was served ; they both drew near ;
The Stork astonish'd at the cheer.

One simple dish the table graced,
Which in the midst was duly placed :
It was a wide, but shallow plate,
(Apt emblem of the master's pate,)
In which the Fox (unworthy joke !)
Had bid a hasty-pudding smoke.

“ Come, my good friend, begin,” he cried :
“ Set ceremony quite aside.
This seems to be delicious food ;
I hope your appetite is good.”

Thus saying, he began to eat,
And speedily lapp'd up the meat,
While the poor Stork's long slender bill
Kept him from having half his fill,
And all he could obtain at most,
Was the condolence of his host.

“ I fear you've very badly dined !
And yet,” said Reynard, “ to my mind,
I never made a better meal :
I hope, my friend, you are not ill ?
Perhaps you did not like the hour
Of six, so took a lunch at four ?”

The Stork himself, kind-hearted creature,
Was vex'd to see so much ill-nature ;

But kept his temper with a grace
Would honour e'en the human race.
His dinner was a trifling loss,
And scarcely did a thought engross ;
He felt his own intrinsic worth,
And would not be a coxcomb's mirth ;
The Fox, too, soon should own his merit,
And find he had a proper spirit.

Before they parted, " Well," said he,
" When will you come and dine with me ?
What say you, shall it be to-morrow ?"
" I've an engagement, to my sorrow,"
The Fox replied : " Will next day do ?"
I'll eat my mutton then with you."

'Twas fix'd : for Reynard ne'er suspected,
Back on himself would be reflected
The trick, which he so much enjoy'd,
And which so late his wit employ'd.

He went : the Stork received him well :
" Here," thought the Fox, " no fraud can dwell.
How I shall feast ! some dainty pullet,
Or savoury lamb, will fill my gullet !"
But soon he found the painful cost,
Of reckoning thus without his host.

Instead of pullet, or of lamb,
A long-neck'd jar of minced-meat came ;

Which seem'd (could Reynard take it ill ?)
Just fitted to the Stork's thin bill.

“ This minced-meat has a savoury smell ;
I hope,” said he, “ you'll like it well.
Fall to, nor fear to give offence ;
With ceremony friends dispense.”

He then began, praised loud the meat,
Ask'd Reynard why he did not eat :
While he, though served as well befitted,
Was piqued to find himself outwitted ;
For all the feast on which he built
Was a few bits the Stork had spilt.

“ You've had, I fear, too long a roam,
Or left your appetite at home !
Did you observe ?” resumed the Stork —
“ I play'd a charming knife and fork !”

This was too much ; the Fox was wroth,
He lost his temper with his broth,
And then began, of words profuse,
Upon the Stork to heap abuse.

“ Hold !” cried the Stork ; “ I've reason ample ;
Think who it was that set the example !
When next you are to wit inclined,
Beware it leave no sting behind ;
Or you will find, or soon or late,
The gentle can retaliate.”

FABLE VI.

THE LION, AND OTHER BEASTS, HUNTING.

*On the Choice of Associates.*

SEEK not alliance with the great,
Unless on equal terms you meet ;
Nor to mean actions condescend,
To call a titled youth your friend.
At school, or college, should *My Lord*
Forfeit his honour, break his word,
Respect him not : true to yourself,
Be virtue yours, be his the pelf.
Or if, of title vain, he dares,
Because a coronet he wears,
Insult your name, or humbler birth,
Let merit prove your greater worth.
'Tis not a title, or estate,
That makes a man or good or great :
Be candid, generous, kind, and just ;
Be true in word, be firm in trust :

Choose your associates from the best,
Merit, not wealth or power, the test.

A Lion, for his prowess famed,
The terror of the wood was named.
Some beasts, who held their lives at stake,
His friendship sought, for interest's sake,
And to this king of beasts display'd
Their talents in the murdering trade.
The meager Wolf triumphant told
His numerous plunders from the fold.
The shaggy Bear said, he, with ease,
Could climb the tops of loftiest trees.
The crafty Fox, for knavery fit,
Boasted his cunning and his wit.

Such aids, no doubt, of some amount,
The Lion turn'd to good account ;
And straight a treaty was concluded,
That none might fear to be deluded ;
For such the terms of this alliance,
To fraud they seem'd to bid defiance.

None was a partner to betray,
Or touch a morsel of the prey,
Though he himself had borne the toil,
Till all had gather'd round the spoil.

"Twas then, as Honour's dictates guided,
In four just parts to be divided.

It happen'd, that the first-made prize,
A Deer, of no mean worth or size,
Was taken, on the Fox's part,
By some insidious, crafty art.
To his confederates quick he hied ;
Told his success with obvious pride ;
And all, with gladness undissembled,
To share the booty, straight assembled.

They begg'd the Lion, royal beast,
To do the honours of the feast :
And, with a condescending air,
As they desired, he took the chair.

The Deer was carved with nicest skill,
In every part each saw his fill ;
And, as his appetite was keen,
Long'd with impatience to begin ;
Not thinking, that ofttimes a slip
Takes place between the cup and lip.

" Friends," said the Lion, " have I cast
In equal portions the repast ?"
They bow'd assent. " Well, now," said he,
" The distribution you shall see."

Then laying his majestic paw,
Arm'd with a most terrific claw,

On piece the first, he thus exclaim'd :
“ As king of beasts, and justly named,
I claim this portion from the rest :
Will any here the claim contest ?”

The Lion served, the rest now panted
With hope of having what they wanted :
Guess their surprise, their wants unheeded,
When thus his majesty proceeded :

“ A quarter is no royal fare,
I therefore take a second share ;
And as a third will scarce suffice,
Dear, gentle friends, 'tis my advice,
The fourth politely you resign,
For though you starve, your chief must dine.”

The astonish'd disappointed brutes,
(Of misplaced friendship such the fruits)
Would have appeal'd to Honour's laws,
And urged the justice of their cause :
But suddenly a hideous roar,
Which made them quake at every pore,
And all the echoing forest ring,
Told them the temper of their king.

In haste they leave the wish'd repast,
Glad to escape with life at last ;
This maxim muttering as they fly,—
A despot is a bad ally.

FABLE VII.

THE FROG AND THE OX.



The Folly of imitating our Superiors.

How prone are men, in every station,
To proud, yet servile, imitation ;
Aping the manners, and the airs,
Of those who move in higher spheres !
Forgetful, that such modes pursuing
Must on themselves heap certain ruin.

The farmer, bred behind the plough,
Scraping his foot to make a bow,
Copies the squire ; sends Miss to school,
(Who learns to dress, and play the fool ;)
Invites the quality to dine,
Who praise his viands, quaff his wine :
At length his payments, in arrear,
Accumulate from year to year,
Till, his tired landlord's patience o'er,
His stock is seized, to quit the score ;
And he, though once unknown to fail,
Consumes his future life in jail.

The squire must with my lord compare :
He takes a house in Grosvenor-square ;
Dines late ; plays deep ; Madam gives routs ;
(Better they lived with country louts !)
His sideboard groans with massy plate ;
But where the deeds of his estate ?
In some vile usurer's hands, and doom'd
Never, perhaps, to be resumed.

A Frog, of a conceited mind,
(For brutes will copy human kind ;
While men the compliment discern,
And copy brutes again in turn)
Beheld an Ox, who peaceful grazed
In the same mead. He, wondering, gazed.
“ What bulk ! What a prodigious size ! ”
Envy succeeded to surprise ;
He strove (what will not folly do ?)
To be an Ox in stature too ;
So held his breath, with valour stout ;
Of his success too vain to doubt.

A friend of his, who pass'd that way,
(For it was done in open day)
Seeing his body's hideous swell,
Kindly inquired, if he were well.

“ Well ! did you ask ?” the Frog exclaim’d,
(His eyes with indignation flamed)

“ Is not my size almost increased
To that of yonder noble beast ?”

At this, his friend look’d round to spy
The beast, with whom he wish’d to vie.

None but an Ox appear’d in view :
Could it be that ? He found ’twas true :
So kindly warn’d him to forbear,
Nor seek to quit his proper sphere ;
And show’d, that such preposterous aim
Could only terminate in shame.

But youth, to rashness ever prone,
Follows no counsel but its own.

“ Shall I,” says he, “ waste all my time
In this dull marsh and swampy clime ?
Follow the humdrum beaten road,
That all my ancestors have trod ?
No : enterprise now fires my brain !
I long to quit my native plain,
To gain myself a glorious name,
And emulate the Ox’s fame !
One effort more, I’m sure, will do,
And, great like him, I’ll bellow too !”

This said, his breath once more he held ;
His cheeks inflated, body swell’d,

And skin, where black and yellow blended,
Almost to bursting were distended.

Then, turning, with triumphant air,
Said to his friend, who still was there,
“ Do I not now the Ox surpass ? ”

“ As much as yonder blade of grass
Exceeds the oak,” replied his friend.

“ Vain-glorious fool ! the contest end :

Is it for thee, a reptile weak,
(What does the vain attempt bespeak ?)

To cope with beasts of noble blood,
Thou, who wert born, and rear’d, in mud ?
One step from such, full well I know,
Would lay thy boasted glories low.

Ambition, rightly understood,
Ambition to be wise and good,
A noble virtue is, and brings
Wealth to the poor, and joy to kings :
But what thou darest ambition call,
Is madness and presumption all.

Adieu, be timely warn’d ; I go :
For yonder comes a powerful foe.”

The Ox advanced with ponderous gait,
On which destruction seem’d to wait :
Humbled, and dwindled to a Frog,
Our hero scamper’d to his bog.

FABLE VIII.

THE DOG IN THE MANGER.



Against Envy and Ill-nature.

OF all the passions, sure, the worst
Is envy, and the most accursed !
He, in whose breast the monster reigns,
A wretched load of life sustains :
He sickens at another's bliss ;
Takes every prosperous scene amiss ;
Poison from every sweet distils,
And triumphs in another's ills.

A gentle Ox, o'erspent with toil,
Who all day long had till'd the soil,
Had patiently endured the thong,
By wanton ploughboy driven along,
Beheld with joy the setting ray,
That closed his labour, and the day.

Now to his master's stable led,
The tempting rack uprears its head :

He sees it amply stored with food,
Whose wafted fragrance speaks it good,
And, snuffing up the savoury blast,
Anticipates a rich repast.

But, ah ! upon a bed of hay,
Unseen within the manger lay
A wicked brute, whose only joy
Was every creature to annoy ;
A Cur, whose ever-noisy tongue
From morn to night incessant rung ;
Worried the harmless fleecy crew,
And at each passing traveller flew.

When now the Ox advanced to eat,
The snarling Cur denied the treat ;
Bristling, set up his spotted back,
And kept him from the loaded rack.

The farmer, passing, heard the din,
And judged some mischief lurk'd within.
He knew the puppy's evil bent,
And, unperceived, observed the event.

Have you not seen a truant boy,
Wrest from a younger child his toy,
Or snap his trundling hoop in twain,
And beat him, if he dare complain ?
Then, when a lad of generous heart
Appears, to take his junior's part,

The tyrant to a coward shrink,
And from the unequal combat slink ?—
So when the Cur his master spied,
He knew his guilt, and strove to hide.
In vain he strove: dragg'd forth to view,
He met the boon to envy due.

“Thou selfish wretch!” the farmer said,
“Art thou not daily housed and fed
With all that plenty can afford,
Beneath my own luxuriant board ?
And dost thou grudge this honest beast
His hardly earn'd, and homely feast ?
What's hay to thee ? Is hay thy food ?
This scourge perhaps may do thee good.
Take thy desert.”—No more he spoke,
The puppy howl'd beneath the stroke ;
At length released, away he speeds,
And the tired Ox in quiet feeds.

FABLE IX.

THE WOLF AND THE LAMB.



Tyranny defeated : or, the Pleasures of Virtue.

IN summer, on a sultry day,
When 'twas too hot for active play,
Two brothers, of a sober mood,
Sought the cool shelter of a wood.
Their dog was with them, Tray by name,
Known, in the rolls of village fame,
To be a true and trusty creature,
Of valour stout, and much good nature.

It chanced, at length, their way they took
Close by a clear and silver brook ;
Which, rolling down a mountain's side,
The thirsty flocks with drink supplied.
Here they reposed beneath a tree,
Reading old tales of chivalry.

Not long had they been thus employ'd,
No thought of ill their minds annoy'd,
When George look'd up, and saw a lean
And shaggy beast, of hideous mien ;

And ask'd his elder brother Frank,
What beast it was, so grim and lank.

“ Ah ! 'tis a Wolf ! and see a Lamb,
Without a shepherd, or a dam !
Wolves are sad beasts, and live on plunder,
And he's so lean, I should not wonder,
If he had mark'd the lamb for prey.
To drink, no doubt, they come this way.
How glad I am that we are here !
The Lamb shall have no cause to fear !
We'll be the shepherd, and, as right,
His frailty shield from dastard might :
For so the laws of valour speak :—

‘ Against the strong defend the weak.’ ”

The Wolf now stopp'd upon the mound,
The Lamb upon the lower ground :
And, as my youthful readers know,
Water can never up-hill flow,
I need not tell them, that the stream
Ran downward from the Wolf to him.

The Wolf, however, horrid brute !
Loved Lamb, as much as boys love fruit ;
And, pleased to see him come alone,
Thought to devour him, flesh and bone.
But still he wanted an excuse :
Lies were familiar to his use ;

So, growling with ferocious look,
He ceased to drink, and thus he spoke :

“ How now, insulting wretch !” he cried,
“ How dare you thus, with upstart pride,
Presume to taste of the same stream
With me, your better ? Sure you dream.
The water too, before so clear,
I dare not touch it, far or near,
For you have stirr’d up all the mud ;
Where is your breeding, sir, and blood ?”

Alarm’d at this, the timid Lamb
Look’d round in vain to find his dam.
Alas ! no dam was to be seen !
She, in the distant meadow green,
Slept underneath the willow’s shade,
Unconscious that her son had stray’d.

As none appear’d to take his part,
The Lamb, at last, with stouter heart,
For truth, he knew, was on his side,
Began to speak, and thus replied :

“ I’m sorry to offend your grace,
But you have quite reversed the case.
For, condescend to look around,
Yours is, my lord, the higher ground ;
So that the stream, where’er it ends,
From you to me, of course, descends.

“ This,” said the Wolf, “ is past endurance !
I wonder at your bold assurance,
To contradict me ! paltry wretch !
For this your neck deserves to stretch !
But let it pass. — Another charge
I’ll bring against you, sir, at large.
I’m told, deny it if you dare,
You spoke against me, you know where ;
And call’d me names behind my back :
To punish you I’ve been too slack ;
For ’tis at least a year ago,
You wickedly abused me so.”

“ This is indeed a charge I scorn,
Since at that time I was not born,”
Replied the Lamb ; “ for at my birth
The snow and ice hid all the earth.
I could not see a blade of grass,
And bitter was the cold, alas !
Then came the spring, the fields look’d green,
This summer is the first I’ve seen.”

“ The last,” resumed the Wolf, “ say rather ;
For if not you, it was your father ;
And you, to end all farther strife,
Shall pay the forfeit with your life.”

Thus saying, he advanced to seize
The trembling victim. Through the trees

The boys and trusty Tray appear.
'Twas then his turn to quake with fear.
Tray seized him fiercely, and would soon
Have laid in death the vile poltroon,
Had not our heroes interfered,
And begg'd he might for once be spared,
He having promised on his word,
After a pardon first implored,
Never again (O base intent !)
To sacrifice the innocent,
Or tell in wantonness the lies
Which they had heard his fraud devise :
“ For soon or late,” says Frank, “ no doubt,
Such falsehoods must be all found out.”

Then leading back the truant Lamb,
They brought him safely to his dam ;
Who, just awake, had miss'd her son,
And wonder'd where he could have run :
And though she was prepared to scold,
Yet, when she heard the story told,
She scarcely could resign her fears,
And lost her anger in her tears.

O happy parent, happy son !
O happy party, every one !
The Lamb forgot his recent fright ;
The mother bleated her delight ;

E'en Tray of pleasure had a notion,
He wagg'd his tail with quicker motion ;
The boys too, as they homeward went,
Cried, " What a happy day we've spent !"

'Tis always thus with virtuous deeds,
Whose pleasure that of wealth exceeds,
Or that of power, or that of birth ;
For virtue is a heaven on earth.

FABLE X.

THE FOX AND THE RAVEN.



The Mischief of listening to Flattery.

FLATTERY, with studied phrase and show,
What subtle poison does it sow !
How does its too delusive art
Ensnare the unwary victim's heart !
The grave and gay, the old and young,
Are captives to its siren tongue.
Wisdom, as if deprived of sense,
Becomes its dupe, like Ignorance.
Conceal'd beneath a rose's bloom,
Giving fresh sweets to its perfume,
A cherish'd, but unworthy guest,—
E'en Virtue clasps it to her breast ;
The rankling thorn it plants the while,
And hides its venom in a smile.

Would you be arm'd against this foe,
Learn properly yourselves to know ;
Your claims in Truth's fair glass survey,
In Justice' scale your merits weigh :

The foe may then, with all his art,
Assail, he'll never reach the heart ;
Nor you, like Æsop's bird of yore,
Become the dupe of Cunning's lore.

A Raven, seeking where to eat,
Chanced on a most delicious treat ;
A piece of cheese, enrich'd with age,
Like Stilton, Parmesan, or Sage,
A Fox too had beheld the prize
With open mouth and longing eyes ;
But, ere he could secure the prey,
The bird had borne it clean away ;
Perch'd on a tree, she sat elate,
Exulting in her happier fate.

Reynard, though foil'd, had wit at will :
The cheese might be his portion still.
But how obtain what was so high ?
A Fox can neither climb nor fly.
'Twere vain, he found, to have recourse
To hostile means : his grand resource
Lay in his ever fertile brain,
In crafty plot, and wily train ;
So Flattery's aid he here preferr'd,
And thus address'd the thoughtless bird :

“ O lovely Raven !” soft he cries,
“ Oft has thy beauty struck my eyes,
But never did it meet my gaze
In such a full, transcendent blaze !
Thy glossy plumes not jet outvies !
What are to thine the peacock’s dyes !
The landrail’s shape, though deem’d so fine,
Is ugliness compared to thine !
And, as thou lightly skimm’st the plain,
Or soar’st amidst the clouds’ domain,
Contrasted with thy matchless grace,
The swallow moves with tardy pace !
The eagle, bird of heaven’s dread king,
To thee must yield for strength of wing !
Venus must banish straight her dove,
And thou be hail’d the bird of Love !

“ While thus unrivall’d thou art seen,
Of beauty, grace, and love, the queen,
Ah, surely, from that well-turn’d throat,
Music must pour her softest note !
And should (how love my bosom warms !)
Thy voice be equal to thy charms,
The linnet must the palm resign,
The nightingale neglected pine,
The thrush and blackbird’s cheerful strain
No more would charm the listening swain ;

All would be silent, though in spring,
And hush their notes, to hear thee sing !

“ O let me pay thee homage due,
And own thee queen of music too !
Indulge me with one little strain,
Nor let thy votary sue in vain !”

He ceased : the Raven was all ear ;
His accents still she seem'd to hear ;
And (sure her senses must have fled !)
Believed each flattering word he said.

Till now, the cheese was tightly held,
But when, by vanity impell'd,
She oped her beak, to croak a tune,
Down, down it fell, sly Reynard's boon !

“ Adieu !” said Reynard, with a sneer,
“ A cold has made you hoarse, I fear ;
And, as I'm hungry, if you please,
I'll leave you now, to eat my cheese.
Sing on, sweet bird ! to praise your skill,
In crows you'll find an audience still,
Who'll not discover by your note,
The murrain, that afflicts your throat !”

FABLE XI.

THE DOG AND THE SHADOW.



Against Selfishness and Avarice.

DOES Fortune, with illiberal hand,
Withhold the riches you'd command?
Let industry the want supply,
Still keep the path of honesty;
Nor seek, by means unjust, to boast
Of wealth, obtain'd at others' cost.



A Dog — no matter what his name,
Pompey, or Jowler, Sneak, or Fame,
And whether pointer, spaniel, hound,
Remains a mystery profound—
Was by his fellow brutes despised,
Nor even by his master prized.
A grievous failing he possess'd,
Which banish'd love from every breast :

For selfishness his fame was known ;
No dog could meet him with a bone,
But he would grudge the homely fare,
And rob him of it — if he dare.

Once at some distance from his home,
(He was addicted much to roam,)
He chanced to pass a butcher's shop ;
No one was there, so he must stop,
Though he had amply dined before,
And try to gorge a morsel more.

What dainties met his ravish'd sight !
On every side some new delight !
Beef, mutton, lamb, and pork, and veal !
Which should he choose? which should he steal ?
'Twas soon debated, and, 'tis said,
He seized upon a prime calf's head.

Quick with his booty off he runs ;
Both man and beast alike he shuns ;
Taking the most retired direction,
In hope to escape without detection.

It happen'd, that this private way
Across a river's current lay ;
Bridge there was none, but he could swim,
And boldly had approach'd the stream,
When he another dog espied,
Just like himself, within the tide ;

And, strange to say, like him he bore
As fine a head as calf e'er wore.

We've said, he was a selfish beast,
Who grudged to others every feast.
No sooner therefore he beheld
This second prize, than straight, impell'd
By greediness, which makes one loath
The monster, he would have them both.

The covetous are justly foil'd ;
The robbery he meant was spoil'd.
He growls and snaps, and thus obtains
A draught of water for his pains !
The dainty morsel, which he stole,
Fell from his avaricious jowl,
And (poor, unlucky, ill-starr'd wight !)
Sunk to the bottom, out of sight.

The painful truth began to gleam ;
Reflected in the limpid stream,
His shadow he had simply view'd,
And eagerly himself pursued ;
So in the end had nothing left,
Neither his fancied prize, nor theft.

Thus he who grasps at others' wealth,
Whether by gaming, or by stealth,
And, like this weak and sordid brute,
Ventures his own in the pursuit,

Oft loses both : too late he grieves ;
Too late his folly he perceives ;
He falls an easy prey to vice,
The victim of his avarice.

FABLE XII.

THE VAIN JACKDAW.



Borrowed Honours not worth the Wearing.

A TRUANT boy, who broke from school,
His thoughts of play and mischief full,
Once stole a nest of unfledged Daws,
To rear them, spite of Nature's laws,
Spite of the parent's discontent,
Who hover'd round, with loud lament.
But he was punish'd for the theft,
Disgraced at school, of play bereft ;
And the stolen brood, when they could fly,
Escaped to gain their native sky.
One longer than the rest remain'd :
He too, at length, his freedom gain'd ;
But not till he had learn'd by rote,
A phrase or two, of little note.

This Daw, with vanity elate,
Whose talk was only empty prate, —

For almost every word he knew
Was “What’s o’clock?” “Poor Jack!” “How
do?” —

Prided himself upon his learning,
And thought no bird was so discerning.

Arrived among his native groves,
With arrogance and pride he roves.
He treats his fellows with contempt;
None from dèrision are exempt:
The old want wisdom, and the young
Are fools, like those from whom they sprung!

But still, with all this stock of pride,
He was not fully satisfied.
Daws were a gloomy, ill-shaped race!
Who but preferr’d the Peacock’s grace?
What beauteous colours deck’d his train!
Where would you see such hues again?
Not e’en the rainbow’s gaudy zone
With such resplendent lustre shone.
O could he boast such radiant plumes!
Thus he with envy frets and fumes.

Not far remote some Peacocks dwelt:
What sudden joy his bosom felt,
When, as their moulting time came round,
Their plumes lay scatter’d on the ground!

On them he fix'd an eager view,
Selecting those of finest hue,
Which, when he found himself alone,
He proudly stuck among his own.

A pond, which luckily was near,
Whose water was both still and clear,
(How oft did he contrive to pass !)
Served him instead of looking-glass.

Equipp'd at length, he sallies forth,
His plumage equal to his worth.
No longer would he herd with Daws ;
Peacocks would yield him just applause :
For could a bird of taste refined
Associate with a vulgar mind ?
His talents lost, or underrated,
He thus must pass his life unmated !

Behold him now, with strutting pace,
With nodding head, and vain grimace,
Arrived among the Peacocks' crew,
Himself, in thought, a Peacock too.

But, ah ! how soon is folly humbled !
At the first word, almost, he stumbled.
“ Caw ! ” came spontaneous from his tongue ;
And more than hinted whence he sprung.

This made the Peacocks nearer look :
Soon every side with laughter shook.

“ A Daw in Peacocks’ feathers dress’d !”

How did they all admire the jest !

“ Friend,” said a shrewd one, “ spread your tail.”

The vain attempt, of course, must fail ;

One feather dropp’d, and then another : —

“ You ’ve lost your crest too, my good brother !

Perhaps you ’ve lately been in wars,

And, soldier like, have brought home scars !”

Now indignation each assumes ;

They strip him of his borrow’d plumes.

Sharp were their bills, he felt their claws ;

They drove him to his kindred Daws.

Experience teaches more than books.

Abash’d and humbled were his looks ;

His sweet conceits were turn’d to gall ;

Such pride was sure to have a fall.

At first the Daws would not receive him :

How could he hope they would relieve him ?

Had he not proved himself, in grain,

Foolish, impertinent, and vain ?

But when they saw his deep contrition,

And found him cured of his ambition,

No longer would they keep aloof,

Admitting him with this reproof : —

“ Henceforth, be solid worth your aim ;
Our just respect you then may claim ;
For former follies thus atone,
And rise on merits all your own.”

FABLE XIII.

THE STAG DRINKING.



Useful Qualities preferable to personal Charms.

FORTH from a wood's embowering shade,
A silver stream meandering play'd,
Till, tir'd this devious course to take,
It sought repose, and form'd a lake.
No wave upon its surface moved;
Loath to disturb the peace it loved,
The zephyr o'er it lightly stray'd,
And scarcely whisper'd in the glade.

Thither, his parching thirst to allay,
A youthful Stag once bent his way;
And then, like famed Narcissus, stood,
To view his beauty in the flood.
With ravish'd eyes intent he gazed;
His beauty e'en himself amazed;
Till he at length the silence broke,
And thus in vaunting language spoke:—

“ I look, it must be own'd, quite spruce!
Nature to me has been profuse.

What brilliant, piercing eyes are here !
Lovely my features all appear !
These spreading antlers, how they grace
My forehead, and my slender face !
My form, so elegant and neat,
With other legs, would be complete ;
And, but for these vile spindle shanks,
For which dame Nature has no thanks,
I might be styled, *sans* hesitation,
Adonis of the brute creation."

While thus, in rapturous musing lost,
His thoughts were by his charms engross'd,
Upborne upon a rising gale,
Terrific sounds his ears assail,
Which, though before he ne'er had heard,
Instinctively a foe declared.
It was a loud and clamorous din
Of hounds, and horns, and hunting-men.
Nearer and nearer still it drew :
His heart beat high : away he flew,
O'er hill and valley, mead and plain.
He stopp'd : the sound return'd again ;
But fainter, than at first, it seem'd,
And hope revived, when safety beam'd.
Short was the pause : a moment pass'd,
Louder it echoed in the blast.

Again he flew : again pursued,
He made for shelter to a wood,
Which seem'd concealment to imply,
Because impervious to the eye.

Rash fear too oft is our undoing,
And flies for aid to swifter ruin.

The Stag, whose life appear'd at stake,
Thus sought the woodland's thickest brake,
Through which he strove to urge his course,
Using his antlers' branching force,
Till, fatal error ! fix'd he stood,
Entangled in the briery wood.

Ah ! who can tell what now he feels,
The hounds and hunters at his heels ?
A moment longer, he had been
The feast of dogs, the sport of men.

Let me a happier fate unfold :
Some hearts are cast in Pity's mould
So his, who own'd the noisy pack ;
He gives the word to call them back.
The dogs obey. The Stag, released,
Who was in truth a handsome beast,
Is reconducted to his park,
Blithsome once more as morning lark.
And as again he musing stood,
His form beholding in the flood,

He thus was wisely heard to say : —

“ No more to charms I'll homage pay ;
Unless with usefulness combined,
They but seduce the thoughtless mind.
For I have learn'd, in Wisdom's school,
Who prizes beauty is a fool.
These branching horns, so late my boast,
My life how nearly had they cost !
While these thin legs, I dared despise,
Had saved me from the hunters' cries.
Far better then, Experience warns,
Are nimble legs, than stately horns.”

FABLE XIV.

THE SHEPHERD'S BOY AND THE WOLF.


Against Lying.

How rare a thing it is to find
Truth and simplicity of mind !
But, ah ! by no means rare to meet
The arts of falsehood and deceit !
From men we turn with just contempt,
If from such faults they 're not exempt ;
But when their influence we trace
In youth's pure mind and blooming face,
Pity and grief our hearts engage,
While future ruin we presage.

My child, in all you say or do,
Keep truth and honour full in view :
Make it your pride, by virtue spurr'd,
Never to falsify your word :
So strong be love of truth impress'd,
As to avoid a lie in jest.
Should you (all err) a fault commit,
Show your regret by owning it ;

And you will find such conduct tend
To aid your interest in the end.
But if, to screen yourself from blame,
Untruths your quick invention frame,
Expect, what's sure to be the case,
Speedy detection, long disgrace :
And know (a maxim well maintain'd)
Lost confidence is ne'er regain'd.

Ere Edgar held the sovereign helm,
Fierce wolves abounded in our realm ;
But when the sceptre graced his hand,
He brought destruction on their band.
The Welsh, who were by conquest gain'd,
Not many years before he reign'd,
In token of the victor's sway,
A yearly tribute were to pay.
Instead of gems, and precious ore,
To aggrandize his private store,
He, mindful of his subjects' weal,
(Would monarchs all had equal zeal !)
A wiser, better offering chose,
Heads of the sanguinary foes,
And by this measure, well pursued,
At length extirpated the brood.

'Twas in those times, a shepherd's heir
Was sent to tend his fleecy care :
The father, in a neighbouring mead,
Secured his hay 'gainst future need,
And bade him, should the Wolf appear,
Sound an alarm, which he should hear :
Straight with his neighbours he would hie,
Straight should the grisly monster die ;
And then his forfeit head, as meet,
Should be disposed at Edgar's feet.

Murmuring he went, (a wicked boy,)
Once his fond parents' pride and joy,
Till, leaving wide the path of Truth,
In which they led his early youth,
He follow'd Falsehood's mazy road,
And pierced their hearts with sorrow's goad
In idleness, or useless play,
He had resolved to spend the day ;
So, in revenge for pleasure lost,
When o'er the field the hay was toss'd,
The alarm of Wolf he loudly blew,
Although no Wolf appear'd in view.
The hay was left ! the father ran,
And all the neighbours, to a man.
“ Where, where's the Wolf ? ” at once they cry —
A laugh was all the boy's reply.

To check his sport, reproof was vain,
Why at a joke should they complain?

Next day—Can you conceive it true,
He would the self-same trick pursue? —
When heavy clouds began to lower,
Threatening a fast-approaching shower,
When the fierce lightning's vivid flash
Was follow'd by the thunder's crash,
And all, intent upon their work,
Plied eagerly the rake and fork,
“ The Wolf! the Wolf!” again he cried,
“ The sheep are scared on every side !”

His father, who, like you, believed
He could not be again deceived,
Flew to his aid with brandish'd staff;
(This but produced a louder laugh)
And all his neighbours, as before,
To slay the Wolf, their work gave o'er.

The Shepherd now, with harsh reproof,
Bade him his presence keep aloof.

“ Sirrah ! is this well done,” he cries,
“ Indulging thus your mirth in lies? —
Nor is it here the mischief ends :

See how the pelting rain descends !
My hay is spoil'd, which might ere now
Have all been gather'd in a mow.”

Alas, I grieve the rest to tell !
How in the sequel it befell.
One morn, (the skies were streak'd with gold)
When he had just unpenn'd the fold,
When too his dog had disappear'd,
Lured by the scent of hare, or bird,
He saw and shriek'd with wild affright,
Two monstrous Wolves appear in sight.
“ Help, father ! help ! ” aloud he cried,
“ The Wolves approach with rapid stride !
They seize the flock ! Help, help, O help ! ”
“ Still at thy tricks, thou graceless whelp ! ”
The Shepherd to himself bethought ;
“ But think not thus again I'm caught.
Pursue thy sport, 'twill now be dull ;
Thou shalt not thrice thy father gull !
One fool, I've often heard, makes many,
But the old fool is worse than any.”

In vain were now his piercing cries ;
No aid was given : his former lies
Around the country spread his fame ;
Though many heard, yet no one came.
In vain he strives the Wolves to bay ;
Heeding him not, they feast away ;
Murder in wantonness the lambs,
And then destroy the choicest dams.

His hay laid waste, his flocks imbrued,
Grief now the Shepherd's heart subdued;
He leaves his cot, his once-loved home,
Reduced in beggary to roam.

The son, when grown to man's estate,
Lamented his poor father's fate.
Remorse and grief his bosom rent;
He knew not joy, nor felt content:
And though, with more than common heed,
Falsehood he shunn'd, in word and deed,
Though never in a lie detected,
His truth was all his life suspected.

FABLE XV.

THE FROGS DESIRING A KING.

*Against Discontent.*

THE world's a scene of discontent ;
Our present lot we all lament ;
Yet when the wish'd-for change arrives,
The fond desire of half our lives,
Its charms are vanish'd, and, too late,
We would recall our former state.

In childhood's early, happy day,
Our lessons keep us from our play ;
Our themes are hard, our masters cross,
And every school-hour's deem'd a loss ;
We pant for manhood, and would be,
Like those who rule us, great and free.

Ask Henry what he most desires,
What most his young ambition fires ?
And doubt his answer if you can,
“ To come from school, and be a man.”

Alas, dear boy ! you little know
The hardships you may undergo.
The storms of passion may destroy
The fairy scene of promised joy.
The lures of Vice are thickly set !
How many fall in Pleasure's net !
And should you guard from these your youth,
Yet rankling Care, with venom'd tooth,
And Poverty, and pale Disease,
May blast your prospects, kill your ease ;
And you may wish (alas ! in vain)
You were a boy at school again.

But though each station has its ills,
Some comfort every bosom fills :
Learn then content, whate'er your fate,
Nor envy others their estate.

The Frogs once led a happy life,
Devoid of care, and free from strife.
No toil supplied their daily bread ;
Their wants were few, their hunger fed ;
And naught had they to do all day,
But eat and drink, and sleep and play :
Yet, not content with their condition,
To Jupiter they made petition

To have a king— And for what cause ?
To guard their morals ! give them laws !

This strange request surprised the god ;
Yet he vouchsafed a gracious nod,
And, throwing down a log of wood,
Bade them be happy, and be good.

His quick descent alarm'd them all,
And some were wounded by his fall ;
Nor did they dare approach their king,
He was so huge and grave a thing.

At length they ventured, (arduous task !)
Trembling, his dread commands to ask.
But, as he made them no reply,
And seem'd quite motionless to lie,
They bolder grew, met no offence,
And fear gave way to insolence.

To Jupiter again they went,
Begg'd he'd depose the king he sent,
He was so motionless and dull !
Should Frogs be govern'd by a fool ?
A king they wish'd of active merit,
Not one without a grain of spirit !

The god, at these their murmurs new,
Deem'd them an undeserving crew.
A Stork he sent them : — discontent
Brings with it certain punishment.

A Stork's a bird that lives on Frogs
Better to them were senseless logs.
Their king was hungry, and his dinner
Made their assembly much the thinner ;
And when his supper-time drew near,
How was each Frog oppress'd with fear !

Once more to Jove their prayer ascends,
But no success their prayer attends ;
“ O grant us, Jove, another king !
Let not Oppression have its swing !
See, how this tyrant seeks our lives !
He spares nor children, friends, nor wives !”

“ Fools !” says the god, “ in vain you plead :
’Tis your own folly makes you bleed.
Why were you not at first content
With your old form of government ?
And when, attentive to your prayer,
I made your happiness my care,
And sent a king, indulged your whim,
Why were you not content with him ?
Was he not gentle, quiet, good ?
Did he deprive you of your food ?
Yet him you treated with neglect,
With insolence, and disrespect.
Another king you then implored,
One with some spirit, for your lord !

You have him, with your wishes curst ;
And he, perhaps, is not the worst.
Submit ; your murmurs I despise ;
And let experience make you wise."

FABLE XVI.

THE GRASSHOPPER AND THE ANT.



Against an Improvident Life.

A GRASSHOPPER, as blythe as May,
Caroll'd and danced his time away :
Freely he drank the evening dew,
The merriest of the insect crew.
It chanced, upon a sunny morn,
Tugging a monstrous grain of corn,
And panting with the heavy load,
An honest Pismire cross'd the road.

Mutual civilities exchanged,
Together o'er the fields they ranged.
The Grasshopper had naught to do ;
Pleasure and mirth were all his view ;
So thought an idle hour he'd spend,
In chatting with his sober friend.

“ Why toil you thus, and waste your health,
Amassing hoards of useless wealth ?
Learn,” said the Grasshopper, “ of me ;
Be gay, and frolicsome, and free.

No care have I, or toil, or sorrow :
I never dream about the morrow.
The present freely I enjoy ;
My cup of bliss has no alloy.
When morning's balmy sweets exhale,
I quaff their fragrance in the gale ;
When sunbeams in the zenith play,
I revel in the noontide ray ;
And when the star of evening glows,
I in a buttercup repose.
This, this is life ! then learn of me ;
Be gay, and frolicsome, and free !”

“ Friend,” said the Ant, “ I thank your zeal,
Which shows such interest in my weal ;
But, though we different modes pursue,
Like yours, is happiness my view.
Whose plan is wisest, time must prove ;
Time, that with rapid wing doth move.
Did summer last throughout the year,
Your maxim might the best appear ;
But winter will, alas ! succeed,
Season of scarcity and need :
No balmy sweets will then exhale,
Or fragrance scent the southern gale :
Should sunbeams in the zenith play,
Sickly and faint will be their ray ;

And, when the star of evening glows,
No buttercup will yield repose.
What then, my friend, becomes of you?
Famine and death must straight ensue.
'Tis to avert these dreadful ills,
That from my brow the sweat distils.
I never idly spend the day,
But while the sun shines make my hay.
Then, when the tempest howls around,
And desolation sweeps the ground,
Within my snug and well-stored cell,
In plenty and in peace I dwell.—
Be you advised, secure your grain,
Nor waste your precious hours in vain."

The Grasshopper, too gay to mend,
Laugh'd at his moralizing friend;
Call'd him a dull and solemn preacher:—
"Adieu," said he, "most reverend teacher!
Pleasure's the goddess I'll pursue;
Be labour yours: Once more, adieu!"
So saying, with a skip he bounds;
The meadow with his note resounds.

And now, the summer at an end,
Chilling autumnal dews descend:
Soon frost and snow o'erspread the plains;
Stern winter prematurely reigns:

And the poor insect, pinch'd with cold,
Feels the sad truth the Ant foretold.

In this distress, his friend he meets,
And piteously his aid entreats.

The Ant, with grief, but not surprise,
View'd his pale cheek and hollow eyes.

"Is this," he cried, "the gallant youth,
That spurn'd so late the voice of Truth ?

But, come with me : experience bought
Is higher prized than wisdom taught.

Hereafter you will not despise

The labour that your want supplies,

But to your own exertions owe

The comforts, that from prudence flow ;

And may with liberal hand dispense

The blessings of beneficence."



'Tis thus with life, which, like the year,
Its summer boasts, and winter drear.

Youth is the spring-time of delight,
Painting each prospect fair and bright :

Its bloom outvies the opening flower ;

Its griefs are but an April shower.

Youth is the spring-time too of toil,

In which to till the mental soil :

For if this genial season pass,
The mind untill'd, can we amass
Stores for the winter of old age,
To aid its wants, its ills assuage?
Improve we then this early time,
And lay up treasures in our prime;
Rich funds of knowledge; that the hour
Of desolation lose its power;
While in the garner of the mind
A lasting, sure resource we find.

FABLE XVII.

THE LAMB BROUGHT UP BY A GOAT.



The Importance to Parents of educating their Offspring,

PARENTS, for you this tale is penn'd ;
Nor let its simple lay offend.
E'en you may err. To you is given,
By the wise providence of Heaven,
The sacred and important trust,
(How seldom weigh'd in balance just !)
With care the ethereal spark to fan,
And rear the infant powers to man.
The supple frame, and ductile mind,
To usefulness may be inclined,
As you direct. Yours is the art,
By goodly culture to impart
Both strength and wisdom : yours to bend,
To virtuous purposes and end,
The opening passions : yours to move,
By the sweet impulses of love,
The heart to duty ; and so " bind
In willing chains the captived mind."

If great indulgence often spoils,
From means severe the heart recoils.
Extremes are bad : 'tis yours to blend
The parent's name with that of friend.
Unfriended youth will ever veer ;
'Tis you their little bark should steer,
And show the quicksands and the shelves,
Till they can safely guide themselves.

Such is your task, the sweetest, best ;
Since, thus by blessing, you are blest.

Can there exist, in human race,
Of human form, a wretch so base,
As that our fable holds to view ?
Forbid it Heaven, and Nature too !
If such there be, O let him learn,
Children resent, where parents spurn ;
That love is duty's best support,
And tenderness its strongest fort ;
That, void of these, a parent's claim
Is nothing but an empty name.
Injustice breaks the firmest tie ;
No reverence then, or amity.

Here let the Muse a tribute pay
(Affection filial prompts the lay,
While Gratitude attunes the lyre)
To him, her much-loved, honour'd sire,

Who joins to all the tenderest care
Which parents for their offspring share,
The generous feelings that arise
From Friendship's confidential ties :
To him, whose anxious care has been
To make her life a cloudless scene ;
Her mind with every good to store,
That can be taught by virtuous lore :
Who, when with heavy grief subdued,
(For sorrows every where intrude)
Or e'en a tear bedimm'd her eye,
Bade both the tear and sorrow fly,
Charm'd her dull hours with converse sweet,
And joy'd her praises to repeat :
Who led her devious steps aright,
And far dispersed the treacherous light,
When Error shed her meteor ray,
To dazzle and perplex her way ;
The prompt excuse with kindness framed,
And gently warn'd, not harshly blamed.

Long could my heart indulge the theme,
(Grateful as evening's placid beam,
That plays upon the glassy fount)
A father's goodness to recount !
But, ah ! too tame my numbers flow !
To tell the filial debt I owe,

Of verse, or words, in vain the strife ;
The truest language is — my life.
Dear Sire, the sacred pledge approve, —
For love received, a life of love !

It chanced, that from a fold remote,
A Wolf once met a Lamb and Goat.
They seemed a most delighted pair.
The matron Goat, with generous care,
The infant Lamb with food supplied,
Drawn from her own maternal side ;
And gratefully the Lamb repaid
The fond affection thus display'd,
By every duty that we know
A child should for a parent show.

The wicked Wolf, on blood intent,
View'd with regret this strange event.
So well protected as she lay,
How could he make the Lamb his prey ?
Fearing to cope with both, he strove,
By artful means, to shake their love :
A separation once obtain'd,
His purpose was securely gain'd : —
So thus he framed the vile pretence,
To leave the Lamb without defence.

“ Fie ! fie !” he cried, “ ungrateful Lamb !
Is this the way you treat your dam ?
To yonder sheep your love belongs :
Haste to repair your mother’s wrongs ;
Haste to remove her just alarms —
And I’ll conduct you to her arms.”

“ Softly, good sir,” the Lamb replied,
“ Nor quite so hastily decide :
My story hear ; no pains I grudge ;
And be a more impartial judge.

“ A sheep, indeed, first gave me birth,
But left me outcast on the earth :
No nourishment my want supplied ;
No pity soothed me when I cried ;
No kindly warmth my limbs could boast,
Exposed to hunger, cold, and frost :
Deserted, friendless, did I lie,
Till this good, gentle goat pass’d by :
She took compassion on my fate ;
She nursed me in my helpless state ;
My frozen limbs with heat endued,
And fed me with her kidling’s food.
’Tis to her fostering care I owe
That through my veins life’s juices flow.
For this disinterested zeal,
A more than daughter’s love I feel ;

And, on my future destiny,
A more than mother's claim has she.
The life she saved, dear, generous goat !
To her I cheerfully devote ;
And had my dam such care bestow'd,
With equal love my breast had glow'd.
Adieu, and, if you please, impart
The steady purpose of my heart."

Confused, abash'd, the Wolf withdrew,
Foil'd in his craft, and dinner too.

FABLE XVIII.

THE COCK AND THE FOX.



Artifice foiled by its own Weapon.

WHENE’ER a well-known, crafty knave
Attempts your reason to enslave,
Depicting, to mislead your sight,
In colours gay, some new delight ;
Let not his sophistry prevail,
No credence give the specious tale :
If suddenly he seem your friend,
Be sure ’tis for some private end :
Beneath the hypocritic garb,
He basely hides a venom’d barb,
To use, whene’er occasions fit :
But knaves sometimes themselves outwit :
Let but sage caution interpose,
Themselves the weapon will disclose.

Then seize your time, their project spoil,
With their own shaft their cunning foil.

Upon a lofty spreading elm,
As if sole monarch of the realm,
Sat an old Cock : a shrilly note
Oft issued from his burnish'd throat ;
And, as from time to time he sung,
His voice to distant valleys rung.

Prowling around, in quest of food,
Reynard the accents understood.
A Cock was not such dainty picking,
As a young pullet, or a chicken :
But hungry folks must not be nice,
Though tough, for once it might suffice.
So on he press'd, with eager speed,
To where the dulcet notes proceed.
But who can his vexation paint,
As thus he mutter'd his complaint ?

“ What an unlucky fate is mine !
Against me all the stars combine !
I thought my prize secure ; and now,
Behold it on the topmost bough !
This stroke can any patience bear ?
I vow 'twould make a parson swear !

Some quick invention I must frame,
To lull Suspicion, wary dame ;
Some wily tale must stand my friend,
To make proud Chanticleer descend."

This to himself; and then aloud —
" Good morrow, friend !" and smiled, and bow'd.
" But wherefore, quickly tell, I pray,
Are you alone this joyous day ?
One might suspect, from what one views,
You had not heard the glorious news."

" What news ?" sir Chanticleer inquired :
" I live of late so much retired,
That little of the world I know,
And seldom learn how matters go."

" I'll tell you, then," the Fox replied ;
" The news has spread both far and wide :
A general peace has taken place
Between the whole of brutal race :
Scaly, and plumed, and quadruped,
On earth, in air, or ocean bred,
Have all to-day a treaty sign'd,
To live henceforth like brothers kind.
No more the lion will devour
The tender lambkin ; from this hour,
The wondrous-sighted bird of Jove
Will spare the meek-eyed, timid dove ;

The dove will in her turn reform,
Nor even hurt a fly or worm.
For joy the feather'd choirs are singing,
And village bells are gaily ringing.
At night a bonfire will be made ;
And I, who understand the trade,
A lighted brand am to provide ;
The glow-worm has the lamps supplied.
I hope, my dearest friend, you'll come ?
Will-o'-the-wisp shall light you home.
But first descend, and, free from care,
Eternal friendship let us swear ;
And, as an earnest of our grace,
Join in a mutual, strict embrace."

The Cock, whose penetrating eyes
Saw through the pitiful disguise,
Cried, " This indeed is glorious news !
Your suit, dear coz, I can't refuse."
Then standing tiptoe, stretching wide
His neck, as if he something spied —
" What do you see ?" said Reynard, " haste,
Nor thus the precious moments waste." —
" Only two hounds," said Chanticleer ;
" A moment wait, they'll soon be here,
When, like so many birds of feather,
We may all four embrace together."

Said Reynard, in a hurried tone,
“ If that’s the case, I must be gone.” —

“ Gone !” said the Cock, “ and wherefore, pray ?
They are two couriers on their way,
And bring perhaps the proclamation,
To give your story confirmation.”

“ A doubt,” says Reynard, “ has occur’d,
Whether they yet the news have heard :
Excuse me, I would gladly stay,
But Prudence bids me haste away.”

FABLE XIX.

THE FOX AND THE GRAPES.



The Folly of aiming at Things beyond our Reach.

METHINKS I hear the critic say,
(Reading the title of my lay,)
“ A Fox again ! How flat the theme !
Surely the poet’s in a dream !
Four times we’ve had this blade before,
Which might be deem’d an ample store.
In tales, variety is sweet,
Like *brevity, the soul of wit.*”

I know it, sir, and introduce
Reynard so often to the Muse,
For that, and for no other cause,
Though I may fail of your applause.
Of animals, not one in ten
Affords such various hints to men.
So Æsop thought, my guide in this ;
And, scoffing me, at him you hiss.

But hold ; a critic is my dread ;
In parleying, I may lose my head.

A keen-edged instrument is he,
With which we must not make too free ;
'Twere better quit such ticklish ground,
And tell my tale while safe and sound.

A Fox, who, roaming, lost his way,
Within a vineyard chanced to stray.
The vines, with nicest care maintain'd,
On lofty trellis-work were train'd ;
And as to this their tendrils clung,
The grapes in tempting clusters hung.
Sweet-water, Black, and White combine,
With Frontinac and Muscadine,
Like drops of amber, jet, and gold,
To charm the taste of young and old.

The famish'd Fox (so Æsop wrote,
From whose authority we quote,
For foxes now are never known
To feed on fruit, such times are flown)
View'd with delight the rich repast,
And thought himself in luck at last.

“ Rare fruit !” said he, “ and no one near,
With sullen tone to cry, Forbear !
I'll pick and cull, I'll feast at ease,
Nor ask the owner, if he please !”

Though Reynard be a knowing elf,
He does not always know himself.
What will his craft or cunning do?
He has not now a bird to woo*;
But seems as hopeless of the boon,
As children longing for the moon,
Or thinking to secure a rail,
By putting salt upon its tail.

First he would climb ; unapt at that,
A Fox is found, though not a cat ;
And Nature won't reverse her plan,
For brute presumptuous, or for man.

Then he would jump. That naught avail'd ;
The more he jump'd, the more he fail'd ;
High o'er his head the cluster'd fruit
Seem'd but to mock his keen pursuit.

'Thus tired and foil'd, his purpose cross'd,
He found his time and patience lost ;
And, vex'd to see his arts defied,
Sought in these words his spleen to hide :

“ Poor, paltry trash ! let those who will,
Fond of such dainties, eat their fill ;
While fools with eagerness devour,
I pass you by, as green and sour !”

* Allusion to the Raven with the cheese.

Alas, how many may we trace,
Just like the Fox, in human race !
Let but their wishes be denied,
Straight is the object vilified.

The Lover, when his suit's refused,
Though prayers, and tears, and oaths he used,
Who vow'd his mistress was more fair
Than Venus or the Graces were,—
Ask him, when banish'd from her door,
If e'er he saw such charms before ?
He with unblushing falsehood cries,
“ That roseate hue her paint supplies :”
But while his lips disclaim her power,
To him, we know, *the grapes are sour*.

The Spinster, doom'd to single life,
Cries, “ Wedlock is a scene of strife,
And husbands are a stern, harsh crew !”
Alas, poor nymph, none comes to woo !
And while we see her scowl and lower,
We smile, and say, *the grapes are sour* !

For place the Politician sighs,
Some sinecure the tempting prize ;
Promotion's ladder seeks to scale ;
The rounds give way, the work is frail :
Then hear him bless his happy fate,
To live unvex'd with cares of state !

On other heads let pensions shower;
He scorns them ! Why ? *the grapes are sour !*

Thousand examples may be brought,
A thousand useful lessons taught.
Let this suffice : — Seek not to gain
What lies beyond you to attain.

FABLE XX.

THE BELLY AND THE MEMBERS.



The different Ranks in Society mutually useful.

A ROMAN, for his wisdom famed, —
Menenius Agrippa named,
Who held the consular degree,
And sway'd with right and equity, —
When wild sedition stirr'd the land,
And ruin waved its fatal brand,
To quell its power, and break its yoke,
The following fable aptly spoke.

The Members of the human frame
Accused the Belly once of blame,
And vow'd no more to lend their aid,
In nourishing a lazy jade.
“She found,” they said, “employ for all,
Made each subservient to her call,
While she herself inactive lay,
And spent in indolence the day.”

Against her one and all conspired.
The Legs no longer would be tired
In fetching food for her ; the Eyes
Refused to seek the fit supplies ;
The Hands to raise them to the Lip ;
The Mouth refused to eat, or sip ;
The Tongue to taste, the Teeth to chew :
“ Reform,” said they, “ will thus ensue ;
The Belly, when to reason brought,
Will toil like us, as well she ought ;
Will learn her proper powers to use,
Nor evermore her aid refuse.”

’Twas said, and done : the Belly pined :
She neither breakfasted, nor dined ;
No more her servants at command,
Fulfill’d her wish, her comforts plann’d ;
And she, unable to provide
For her own wants, had nearly died.

But mark the end : the Limbs, you’ll see,
Were sufferers in the same degree.
Surprised they found, from day to day,
As she grew feeble, so did they.
The Legs, that had refused to walk,
Were weakly as the slender stalk
That bends beneath the panoply,
E’en of the drone, or humble-bee :

The Fingers cold and stiff became ;
Glazed were the Eyes, extinct their flame ;
Mute was the Tongue ; the Jaws were closed,
And tranquil all who had opposed.

“ Fools, that you are,” at length she said ;

“ What can you do without my aid ?

Think you the Tongue could ever roll

The eloquence that charms the soul ;

Think you the Hands could ever wield

The magic pen, or till the field ;

Or that the Head could ever frame

Those arts, which raise the human name

So far above the brutal crew, —

Did I not lend assistance due ?

In indolence and sluggish ease,

Or only bent myself to please,

You think I live : — Mistaken thought !

With mischief, as with folly fraught.

Within my well-ranged, peaceful cell,

Does Nature's friend, Digestion, dwell.

Our mutual powers and wondrous art,

Vigour and health to you impart,

And you must perish in the snare

You lay for me. In time, beware !

Let us still live, as we have done,

On terms, as if we all were one.

It is not yet perhaps too late,
To ward the blow of angry Fate.
Feet, that were wont so far to rove,
You yet a pace or two can move
In quest of nourishment : and Hands,
May still (self-interest now commands)
Have strength enough to grasp the food,
And guide it to the Mouth, so rude,
Whence late the voice of tumult broke,
Which vile sedition loudly spoke.
Your office, Teeth, resume again,
Your efforts may not be in vain :
But let a sparing meal suffice.”
Gladly they took their friend’s advice,
Their fault most penitently own’d,
And by their future zeal atoned ;
This dangerous lesson ne’er forgot,
And lived contented with their lot.

The application holds as true
In moral, as in civil view.
“ All are but parts of one great whole,
Nature the body, God the soul.”
All in creation have their place,
Whether of high degree, or base ;

Each has his part allotted here,
His proper station, proper sphere ;
Creatures of want, each man depends
Less on himself than on his friends.
The prince, who owns the sovereign sway,
Whom nations serve, and lords obey,
Owes to the hind his daily bread,
Who tills the soil by which he's fed ;
And to the prince the ploughman owes
The wealth, that to his coffer flows.

Despise not then the low estate
Of those who're useful, though not great :
The rich, the poor, the free, the thrall,
One common Father owns us all :
Let all the kindred tie approve,
And vie in offices of love.

FABLE XXI.

THE HERMIT AND THE BEAR.



On the Caution necessary in the Choice of Inmates.

NOT all that our compassion move
Should share our intercourse and love,
Or be in friendship's ardour press'd
Without distinction to our breast.
No: let us grieve with those who grieve;
The needy let our purse relieve;
The vicious our advice reclaim;
Be, Good to all, our constant aim.
But let us for our bosom friend
Choose one, whose taste with ours may blend;
Whose manners, habits, rank in life,
Suit with our own: then, void of strife,
Friendship its choicest gifts may shed,
In sweet profusion o'er our head.



An aged Man, with grief oppress'd,
Perpetual inmate of his breast,

Lone in the world — for, sad to tell !
Two blooming youths in battle fell ;
While at the news his faithful wife
Sunk in his arms, devoid of life —
Wish'd to escape from every eye,
Unseen to weep, unseen to die ;
And far from men a refuge sought,
Where none might interrupt his thought,
Where unrestrain'd his tears might flow
In all the luxury of woe.

A cavern, in a lonely wood,
Yielded this peaceful solitude.
Around its walls the ivy clung,
And from the vault luxuriant hung ;
By night it form'd a curtain'd shade,
By day a canopy display'd.
The verdant turf, with rushes spread,
Served him for carpet and for bed.
His table was a massy stone,
Hewn from the rock, with moss o'ergrown ;
While one, of smaller size, for seat,
Made up his little stock complete.
Salads and fruits his meals supplied ;
His beverage pour'd the crystal tide.
A Hermit's title thus he claim'd :
A hermitage his cave was named.

One, who the human heart well knew,
Has said, (experience proves it true)
That those, who suffer most, in grief
Can best administer relief.

Though deep his wounds, too deep to close,
He keenly felt for others' woes,
And in the bleeding bosom he
Pour'd the rich balm of sympathy ;
Or did the weary traveller stray
Far from the track and beaten way,
The good old Man, with honest pride,
Became his host, and then his guide.

Once, in his lonely calm retreat,
Shelter'd from Sol's meridian heat,
When all was still, and not a breeze
Rippled the stream, or shook the trees,
And he, absorb'd in musing, cast
A wistful look on pleasures past,
Deep, hollow groans the silence broke : —
Starting, he from his day-dream woke,
And instant, on compassion's wing,
That haply he might succour bring,
Flew to the spot from whence proceeds
The plaintive sound, nor danger heeds.

There, without power to move, he found
A Bear extended on the ground.

A thorn had deeply pierced his foot,
With anguish torturing the brute,
While every step he strove to gain,
Increased the swelling and the pain.
At length, with fruitless efforts spent,
He raised the dolorous lament
That brought the Hermit from his cave,
Who readily assistance gave.

The thorn extracted, soon the beast
Was from his misery released,
And by his gestures he express'd
The thankfulness that fill'd his breast ;
For, ere he could completely stand,
He crawl'd to lick the Hermit's hand ;
Who, pleas'd his gratitude to note,
Smoothed in return his shaggy coat.

The Hermit feebly now retraced
The way he had so quickly paced.
Following, with limping gait and slow,
Along with him the Bear would go ;
And, though for man no inmate fit,
His benefactor would not quit.
All night, the station pleas'd him well,
He kept the entrance of the cell,
And with the Hermit forth would roam,
If he were tempted far from home ;

Would dexterously ascend the trees,
To cull the labour of the bees,
Or, from their topmost heights would shower
Choice fruits, to grace the Hermit's bower.

It happen'd on a certain day,
When Sol shed forth his brightest ray,
Oppress'd with heat, beneath the shade
His weary limbs the Hermit laid.
Sleep closed his eyes, and, as he slept,
Bruin his station near him kept,
Whose eager zeal employment found
To chase the flies that buzz'd around.
Spite of his care, a fly, confess'd
Impertinent above the rest,
As if determined to oppose,
Settled upon the Hermit's nose.

Soon as the indignant Bruin saw
The vile offence, he raised his paw,
And with a sweep, a ponderous blow,
He laid the vile offender low.
But ah ! that blow, unlucky case !
Bruised the poor Hermit's grief-worn face.

Bleeding and smarting with the wound,
The Hermit woke, and when he found
To Bruin's ill-judged zeal he owed
The pain he felt, and blood which flow'd —

“ Bruin,” said he, “ depart in peace ;
Henceforth our intercourse must cease ;
At distance still we friends may be ;
Nearer our manners ill agree.
This lesson I will bear in mind,
(For brutes may edify mankind)
He who an ill-match’d friend admits,
Of awkward and misjudging wits,
Will oft have reason to lament
Much mischief done with good intent.”

FABLE XXII.

THE HORSE AND THE STAG.



A revengeful Disposition always punished.

FROM earliest times, what strange disputes
Have raged alike 'mongst men and brutes !
What trifles oft the source of quarrels !
While more reap death than gather laurels.
One treads upon his neighbour's toe :
“ How dare you, sir, insult me so ? ” —
“ Your pardon, sir, no harm was meant.
A mere mistake.” — But not content
With this apology, Sir Gruff
Demands (and soon he gains enough)
Due satisfaction for the crime ;
With, “ Here's my card, sir ; name your time.”
Away they speed : at the first fire,
Sir Gruff and all his feuds expire.

If such effects as these befall,
Better not quarrel, sirs, at all ;
Better forgive a slight offence,
Than trespass against common sense.

Better — but lest my precepts fail,
Better to read at once my tale.

When savage man, in days of yore,
The skin of beasts for vestment wore,
Painted himself of various dyes,
And fed on Nature's wild supplies ;
On grains, on acorns, berries, fruits,
Uncultivated herbs and roots ;
The Horse was then, traditions tell,
A free-born, noble animal :
Proudly he shook his flowing mane,
And neigh'd and gallop'd o'er the plain :
No lash resounded in his ear,
No spur impell'd his swift career,
Or bridle check'd : their use unknown,
Bright, unsubdued, his spirit shone.

Whence the sad change ? I see him now
Compell'd to drag the cumbrous plough ;
Sinking beneath the panniers' load ;
Expiring on the public road ! —
Revenge he cherish'd, deadliest foe,
That brute, or human breast, can know.

A youthful Stag, of merry vein,
Inhabited the self-same plain.

Between them an acquaintance grew :
The Horse would now the Stag pursue ;
And now the Stag, of nimbler course,
Would in his turn pursue the Horse.

While thus engaged in eager play,
It happen'd, on a luckless day,
Tossing their heads, in sportive scorn,
The Stag struck hard his branching horn
Along his playmate's fine-turn'd neck,
Who had no horn his brow to deck.
The flesh was pierced ; the blood ran down ;
The Horse assumed a hideous frown ;
And, as he view'd the crimson flood,
“ Blood,” he exclaim'd, “ shall pay for blood !”

From day to day his thoughts were bent
How to effect his fell intent.
The Stag, he knew, in point of speed,
Could far his swiftest pace exceed,
And even were pursuit not vain,
What 'vantage could he hope to gain,
The Stag, with armour being dight,
For active or defensive fight,
And he no means to make him feel,
No weapon but his awkward heel ?

At length he form'd the dastard plan,
To supplicate the aid of man.

Man, he had often seen, or heard,
Would take a lion by the beard.
If beasts of prey, inspired by fear,
Had sunk beneath his potent spear,
How could the Stag escape the force,
When thus conjoin'd, of Man and Horse?

Full of his scheme, to Man he went;
Told him his cause of discontent.
“Swiftness and skill,” said he, “combined,
May doubtless some expedient find
To rid me of this scornful foe,
And lay his vaunted antlers low.”

Revolving o'er this strange petition,
Said Man, at length, “On one condition,—
That you implicitly obey
My orders, be they what they may,—
My services I'll freely lend,
And zealously your cause befriend.”

Blinded by rage, the Horse consented,
“Kill me the Stag, and I'm contented.”

A bit and bridle Man procured,
Bridle and bit the Steed endured;
The Hunter then his back bestrode,
Nor did his pride refuse the load.

O'er hill and dale they sped their way,
Through forest drear, and meadow gay.

Too soon the hapless Stag they found,
Too soon they gave the mortal wound :
Though he, at first, more fleet than wind,
Left his pursuers far behind ;
Yet, wearied by the tedious chase,
His limbs, at length, refused to trace
Another step ; he gasp'd for breath,
And, as he view'd the approach of death,
In copious streams the " big round tear "
Gush'd from his eye ; the foe drew near,
And, reckless of his bitter smart,
Transfix'd the javelin in his heart.

Loud neigh'd the Horse with savage joy :
The Stag could now no more annoy !
Then thus to Man : " The mighty debt
I owe for this I'll ne'er forget.
Your fare has hitherto been rude ;
Venison is most delicious food ;
Accept the prize ; I seek again
Without delay my native plain."

" Hold, sir," said Man, " that time is past ;
We part not thus, I have you fast :
Your usefulness too well I know,
My slave henceforth, with me you go,
Constant associate of my toil,
To cultivate the stubborn soil ;

To carry me from place to place,
Or, as to-day, pursue the chase.
Close to my hut a shed I'll build,
With straw and fodder amply fill'd,
Where, when your daily work is done,
You may repose till rising sun,
Painting the sky of orient hue,
Call you these labours to renew."

The Horse now mourn'd his folly past,
But ah, too late! the die was cast.
For years he dragg'd his heavy chain,
(Useless to murmur or complain)
Till worn with age, and toil, and wounds,
His carcass fed his master's hounds.

Revenge too eagerly pursued,
Brings misery worse than servitude:
Short-lived the pleasure it bestows,
While never-ending are its woes.

FABLE XXIII.

THE COCK AND THE DIAMOND.



Useful Things more valuable than costly ones.

WHAT strange mistakes from pride arise !
How things, if rare, seduce our eyes !
While such as are of sterling use,
Because they 're common, meet abuse !

Look at that Frenchman, Monsieur Flirt,
With Mechlin ruffles, and no shirt.

“ Shall I,” says he, “ though poor, alack !
Wear filthy dowlas on my back ?
Let John Bull wear it, if he will ;
I'll have my ruffles, and my frill.”

Look at that Fop so weak and vain,
Whose dress will fencé nor wind nor rain ;
What all may wear, he spurns as low,
And struts about, a raree-show !

Of human sense, if such the fruit,
Take a short lesson from a brute.

A sprightly Cock, whose matin strain
To labour roused the industrious swain,
Invited all, who call'd him friend,
To dine with him at harvest-end.

The day arrived. With anxious care
Each plumed his feathers neat and fair.
Dame Partlet cluck'd her lord to come ;
She used her beak instead of comb,
And strove, by every honest art,
Above the rest to make him smart.

Her children, by example taught,
Less of themselves than others thought ;
And though they could not boast, 'tis true,
The gift of speech, as men can do,
They had a language of their own,
To make their wants and wishes known.
Sister help'd sister, brother brother,
And none refused to aid another.

Young Chanticleer advanced to meet
His visitors with friendly greet,
And " Cluck, cluck, cluck !" and " Cock-a-doo !"
Pass'd on all sides for " How are you ?"

Large was the party ; all his cousins
On this occasion came by dozens ;
But Partlet had the highest seat,
Her age and merit were so great :

For though some *richer* guests were there,
She was *the best* beyond compare.

As soon as each had taken his place,
Sharpen'd his beak, and crow'd a grace ;
Chanticleer scraped ; and soon he cries,
“ See here, my friends, a prize ! a prize !
So large a grain I ne'er did see !
It is not corn ; what can it be ?
My beak can pierce e'en wood, or bone ;
But this resists it, like a stone ;
And though I've lived two years or more,
I never saw its like before.”

A Guinea fowl, who, tired of home,
From Afric's coast had lately come,
Who knew the world, and much had seen it,
Explain'd the wonder in a minute.

“ A Diamond 'tis, dear sir,” said she :
“ What ! did you ne'er a Diamond see ?
It is a gem of high renown,
And sparkles in the royal crown ;
'Tis worn, beside, by ladies fair,
Adorns their neck, their arms, their hair :
A jeweller, or man of trade,
With this would deem his fortune made.”

The cock replied, “ Then I must say,
On me its value's thrown away :

My parents taught me, long ago,
Use to prefer to empty show ;
And rather would I call my own,
A grain of barley, than this stone :
Therefore, my friends, we 'll leave it here,
And seek a humbler, better cheer ;
For we should grow, I fear, much thinner,
If diamonds only were our dinner."

Each clapp'd assent, with ready wing,
That barley was a better thing.
We 'll leave them, therefore, to regale,
And glean this moral from the tale : —
That things are best which serve us most,
Not such as are of greatest cost."

FABLE XXIV.

OLD MAN AND BUNDLE OF STICKS.



On Brotherly Union.

OF all the odious sights we see,
Most odious is a family
In which dissension holds her reign,
And naught is heard save discord's strain.
The ties of nature fast should bind
Near relatives in union kind ;
Mutual forbearance should repress
Churlish reply, and rude address.

Children, of self-same parents born,
Treat not affection's claims with scorn :
Let not relentless tempers part
Those who should join in hand and heart ;
Nor kill the bloom of early life
With envy, jealousy, and strife.

Three Brothers (as our tale relates)
Were oft engaged in fierce debates ;

Perpetual quarrels, brawls, and noise,
Mix'd in their sports, and marr'd their joys.

The Father grieved, as well he might,
At these their feuds from morn till night ;
And, with a parent's tender skill,
Sought to correct the growing ill.

Alas ! each measure he pursued
Fail'd to allure them to their good ;
His precepts, though replete with force,
Unheeded pass'd, as words of course ;
And keen reproof, and mark'd disgrace,
Wrought no amendment in their case.

One eve, while mourning failures past,
An apt expedient came at last.—

It chanced that in contentious chat,
When round the fire the Brothers sat,
And to the crackling faggot's blaze
Succeeded the pale embers' rays :

“ Cease, cease your wrangling,” quoth the Sire,
“ And bring some wood to rouse the fire.”

Close to the door a faggot pile
Was rear'd, which promised to beguile
Chill Winter of his cruel rage,
And comfort yield to hoary age.
From this a faggot forth they drew
And on the floor placed full in view :

“ Break it, my sons,” the father cried.
Each in his turn his strength applied :
Then own’d in vain his efforts spent ;
The faggot neither broke nor bent.

“ Now be the osier band untied,
And try each stick apart,” he cried.

The task was easy, and the sage
(Charm’d their attention to engage)
Resumed : “ In this, dear boys ! you see
The good of UNANIMITY :
You are the faggot ; and the band,
More powerful than a magic wand,
Which keeps you safe from every ill,
Is faithful love and free good-will.
Ah ! if this precious tie should burst,
Of evils you may dread the worst !
In every petty villain’s hand
Your virtues snap at his command,
Till some insidious, fell assault
Expose too late your fatal fault.”

Conviction touch’d each youthful breast,
Reason was heard, and truth confess’d ;
And they, who late in malice strove,
Became a family of love.

FABLE XXV.

THE LION AND THE GNAT.



Conveying a two-fold Moral.

“MEAN insect, scum of earth, away !” —
In these contemptuous terms one day
The Lion proud the Gnat address’d,
Whose buzz disturb’d the monarch’s rest.

Scarce from his lips the words were heard,
Than open war the Gnat declared ;
Sounded the charge without ado,
Both trumpeter and warrior too.

“ Think’st thou,” said she, “ thy kingly name
Inspires my fear ? I scorn thy fame :
Around the Ox my sport is free,
As stately as your majesty !”

So saying, she commenced the attack,
Besieging first the Lion’s back ;
Then changed her plan, more furious smote,
And fix’d upon his ample throat.

The piercing sting, so keen the smart,
Inflamed with rage the Lion’s heart ;

But to his nostrils when she flew,
His wrath to maddening phrensy grew ;
He foam'd ; his eyes flash'd fire ; his roar
Echoed from forest to the shore ;
The beasts all trembled with dismay,
And to close covert sped their way.

Meanwhile this universal dread
Is by a tiny Gnat o'erspread,
'The " scum of earth," who dared assail
Huge Majesty from snout to tail,
And laugh'd exultingly to find,
While tooth-and-nail their forces join'd,
Himself alone the Lion wounds :
Against his sides his tail resounds ;
He fights with air : but, ah ! at length
His fury overcame his strength ;
Subdued he fell. With glory fired,
The insect from the field retired ;
And, crown'd with laurel, full of glee,
Sounded aloud the victory.

Short-lived her triumph and her fame !
Which too impatient to proclaim,
Incautiously she flew to where
A busy Spider spread his snare ;
Around the Gnat his web he curl'd,
And slew the conqueror of the world.

Two lessons, excellent in turn,
The moralist may here discern : —
First, from whatever source it spring,
Insult will rouse the meanest thing ;
The scorn'd the scorner may confound :
Each reptile has a way to wound.
Next, let it ever be our care,
With sober minds success to bear :
He who evades a monster's jaw,
May live to perish by a straw.

FABLE XXVI.

THE WALLETTS: OR, THE ANIMALS ASSEMBLED BEFORE JUPITER.



On Blindness to our own Defects.

As Jove one day, in royal state,
Upon his throne of audience sat,
And with benignant eye survey'd
The creatures by his bounty made,
He thus proclaimed: "Let all that breathe
The vital air on earth beneath,
Before my footstool straight appear." —
The mandate sounds from sphere to sphere:
Obedient to their sovereign's will,
The brutes surround Olympus' hill.

Then thus the god: "If any find
Defect of e'en the slightest kind,
Or deem himself a hideous creature
In form, in figure, or in feature,
Let him to me the blemish name,
Without reserve, or fear, or shame,

And I (so boundless is my love)
Will the deformity remove.

“ Approach,” said he, “ you, Monsieur Ape,
Say if you like your face and shape :
Look at these animals ; declare
If with their beauties yours compare :
Are you content ?” — “ Why not ?” said he,
“ None has more legs, that I can see ;
My portrait, drawn by artist true,
Has not reproach’d me hitherto : —
But for my rough-hewn brother there,
That shapeless block, old Goodman Bear,
If he will profit by my wit,
He’ ll never for his picture sit.”

Bruin on this advanced : — ’twas thought
With discontent his mind was fraught.
Quite the reverse ; to own the truth,
He deem’d himself a comely youth ;
A finer form he ne’er had seen ;
He wonder’d what the Ape could mean !
The Elephant might well complain,
That hideous burthen to sustain,
That mass of flesh, unform’d and rude,
With not a single charm endued !
Too long his snout, his tail too short —
He surely must be Nature’s sport !

The Elephant, for wisdom famed,
His vanity alike proclaim'd,
And proved (a maxim of the schools)
That the most learn'd are greatest fools ;
For common sense is often found
The best, if not the most profound.
He did not scruple to reveal
He thought his figure quite genteel :
But to his mind (his taste was known)
The Whale, indeed, was overgrown.

Dame Pismire thought the Mite too small,
Deeming herself Colossus tall.

Thus each could faults in others find,
And only to his own was blind.
So Jove dismiss'd the happy crowd,
At their brute folly laughing loud.

Weak man, like these conceited brutes,
His neighbour's failings ne'er disputes :
Never at speck or blemish winks :
And while the piercing eye of lynx
Is on another's errors thrown,
He closes it against his own.

The Sovereign Artist of our frame
Created every man the same,

Of every nation, every clime,
Whether of past or present time.
On each two Wallets he bestow'd,
To either bag assign'd its load :
The one appointed to contain
Our neighbour's faults, we heap amain,
And wear before ; while that design'd
To bear our own, we place behind.

FABLE XXVII.

MODESTY AND IMPUDENCE*.



THE Dog-star's pestilential sway
More sultry made the sultry day ;
When, stealing through the shady glen,
With silent step, and fearful ken,
Close veil'd, a nymph, of form as fair
As e'en Diana's self could wear,
Approach'd the river's gentle wave,
Her limbs in its cool stream to lave.
Her name was Modesty. In haste
She laid aside her garments chaste,
And plunged within the sparkling tide,
E'en from herself, herself to hide.

While bathing, as she thought, unseen,
A female of a different mien,
Foul Impudence, with settled stare,
Unblushing front, and bosom bare,

* The prose of this fable may be seen in the Female Mentor, Vol. I. where it is said to be taken from an old book.

Passing, by chance, the river's side,
The robes of Modesty espied ;
And stripping off her own vile dress,
Made up of scraps and tawdriness,
Put on the virgin's pure array,
And, thus accoutred, stalk'd away.

From bathing when the nymph withdrew,
She sought her spotless vest anew ;
But found instead (disastrous theft !)
The rags which Impudence had left.
These rather than assume, she fled
Quite naked to a neighbouring shed,
Where Innocence had fix'd her home, —
Refuge more safe than costlier dome.

Here Modesty conceal'd remain'd,
Till Impudence, who ill sustain'd
A character on trial shown
So little suited to her own,
Threw off the mask with free accord,
And Modesty's fair robes restored.

To you, dear girls*, whose state forlorn,
Calls for a voice from ills to warn,

* Nieces of the author, who had recently lost their mother.

Permit me, lest the story fail,
To point the moral of my tale.

Lost are to you the tender cares
That fondly watch'd your infant years :
Lost is to you the converse kind,
That form'd unknown your growing mind :
For ever lost the sage advice,
(No jewel of so rich a price !)
Which, on life's rough or slippery stage,
Had been your guide in riper age ;
Had warn'd you 'gainst the treacherous wiles
Of Flattery's too seducing smiles,
And all the evils that perplex,
When beauty decorates your sex.

Death has dissolved the sacred tie !
Who shall a mother's place supply ?
Whose but a mother's breast can feel
Such ardent interest, constant zeal ?
None, none, alas !—The feeble aid
A friend can give, by *me* be paid ;
Nor deem me, though confined my sphere,
Among your friends the least sincere.

My moral then. The highest grace
That can adorn the female face
Is Modesty. 'Tis this imparts
A lustre, that attracts all hearts.

Plainness, possessing this, is prized ;
Beauty, without it, oft despised.
Let Modesty your thoughts express ;
Let Modesty control your dress ;
For oft though Impudence may wear
A modest garb, or modest air,
Yet Modesty, on no pretence,
Will dress, or look, like Impudence.

FABLE XXVIII.

THE FOWLER AND THE LITTLE BIRDS*.

*Actions the best Rule of Judgment.*

THE stream had lost its silver sound ;
The lake in chains of ice was bound ;
Keen blew the blast ; the sun arose
In crimson pomp o'er drifted snows ;
With icicles each tree was dress'd,
Like jewels in a birth-day vest.
From his bleak mansion in the North,
Winter thus spread his glories forth.

Dazzling the scene, yet desolate,
Yielding to few a happy fate.
The milkmaid underneath the hill
Can scarce her tepid task fulfil :
The shepherd-boy beside her stands,
Blowing his breath to thaw his hands :

* The outline of this Fable is taken from Bishop Taylor.

To circulate the purple tide,
The sturdier shepherd beats his side :
The flocks and herds, whose wonted treat
Issued spontaneous at their feet,
No herbage find ; the spiry blade
Is buried in the frozen glade ;
The feather'd songsters of the grove,
No more attune their notes to love ;
But mope, dejected on the spray,
Chirping their joy's funereal lay.

Poor birds ! their lot seems most severe !
Famine assails them ; Fraud is near !
For, leaving home at peep of dawn,
A Fowler trod the white-robed lawn,
For them the deadly snare to set,
Entangling lime, and whelming net,
With treacherous hand the tempting corn
Scattering, to lure them from the thorn.

His prey, unconscious of the guile,
Look on with hope, and seem to smile ;
Impell'd by want, their wings they ply,
And to the fatal banquet hie.

Enough secured, the snares were raised,
His morning's work the Fowler praised ;
Then seized the victims one by one,
And every neck remorseless wrung.

While thus employ'd, a youthful Thrush
Observed him from a neighbouring bush ;
Adown his cheeks the tear-drops roll'd,
Extorted by the piercing cold.
She mark'd the fact, mistook the cause,
(No code she knew but Nature's laws,)
And to her mother thus express'd
The artless feelings of her breast.

“ How merciful that man must be,
Who weeps so fast and bitterly !
No doubt his friendly soul is grieved
That the poor birds of life are reaved !”

“ His *friendly* soul !” the mother said,
“ How easily is youth misled !
Would you man's character descry,
Look to his hands, and not his eye :
Weigh actions ; and if these impart
The cruel blow that rends the heart,
Though tears in copious torrents flow,
They spring from an insidious foe :
Be not deceived by sighs or tears,
The subtle mask which Treachery wears.
Thus, by the far-famed river Nile,
The dreadful monster Crocodile
Weeps o'er his prey. Man oft the same,
A monster with a milder name,

Friendship is open and sincere ;
If in his eye you view the tear,
His hand, exerted for your weal,
Will prove it shed in honest zeal."

FABLE XXIX.

THE EAGLE, THE CAT, AND THE SOW.

*The Odiousness of Treachery.*

THERE are, who at detraction rail,
Yet ne'er suppress a slanderous tale ;
Or scruple idly to repeat
The calumny to all they meet.

There are, who eagerly proclaim
Each blemish in a neighbour's fame,
And cry his reputation down,
In the weak hope to raise their own.

Vile are these characters : but worse
(Pandora held no greater curse,)
Is he, who, for malignant ends,
Seeks to dissever kindest friends ;
Who to the ear of each conveys
Some specious tale, distrust to raise ;
In either breast fell discord sows,
Then battens on their mutual woes.

An Oak, which had for ages stood,
Endured the blast, and stemm'd the flood,
Shelter'd within its kind embrace
Three families of different race.
Upon its proud, o'ertowering crest,
An Eagle built her airy nest ;
While in its bosom's thickest shade
A Wild Cat had her kittens laid ;
And in the hollow at its foot,
(For time had bared its sturdy root)
A Sow, with all her infant train,
Had settled her maternal reign.

In sweet content their moments flew ;
None but parental cares they knew ;
The rising sun beheld their peace,
Nor saw at eve their concord cease ;
And had not Treachery interposed,
In harmony their lives had closed.

The insidious Cat, of faith devoid,
'This scene of golden bliss destroy'd.
She mark'd the Eagle's callow brood,
For Cat, and kittens, dainty food !
And straight bethought her of a way
To gain them for their common prey.

Assuming a most piteous look,
Her course she to the Eagle took.

“ Good neighbour, do not think me rude
Thus uninvited to intrude ;
To make so free I should be loath,
Did not destruction wait us both.
Yon Sow (I hate the swinish race !)
Fast undermines our dwelling-place.
Already are its roots laid bare,
E’en now it totters in the air,
And soon this hospitable tree
Will fall to earth, and with it we !
The Sow will then her purpose gain ;
Eaglets and kittens will be slain ;
Our darling little ones will feast
This hideous tribe, this hateful beast.

“ I know not what you mean to do,
But I this method shall pursue.
Whate’er betide, within I’ll stay,
Nor quit my threshold night or day :
There I can witness all below,
And watch each movement of the foe :
For though disasters threat at home,
’Tis still more dangerous to roam.
Be on your guard :—Adieu !” she said ;
Then to the Sow a visit paid.

“ Good morrow, dame : I love to see
A mother with her family ;

And yours are all such pretty creatures,
So mild and docile in their natures ;
"Twould grieve me more than I can tell,
Were any to do worse than well.
But, ah ! excuse my heart's misgiving,
An evil age I fear we live in !
When Mischief's crew will mock defence,
Nor spare this lovely innocence !
As lately as this very day,
I overheard the Eagle say,
'That the next time you went abroad,
(Who could suspect such savage fraud ?)
She'd seize on one of your sweet pigs,
To feast her own conceited prigs.
Shuddering at this, away I ran,
'To tell you of her wicked plan.
For my own babes I tremble too ;
Perhaps the monster may imbrue
Her beak rapacious in their blood,
And shed around the crimson flood.
But, hark ! I hear my darlings cry :
Excuse me now, dear friend, good b'ye !"

Thus having, by calumnious art,
Alarm'd each tender mother's heart,
And sown suspicion in her breast,
Return'd Grimalkin to her nest ;

Where she so well the trick maintain'd,
Her tale implicit credit gain'd.
The whole day long she peeping stood,
And ne'er stole out till night for food :
So that the Sow kept close at home,
Lest the devouring bird should come ;
Nor durst the Eagle quit her hall,
For fear, meanwhile, the tree should fall.

The consequence I scarce need tell :
Parents and children victims fell ;
Starving for want of food they lay,
To the vile Cat an easy prey.

FABLE XXX.

THE SPIDER AND THE BEE.



In Praise of the Mathematics.

A CONTEST (but not one of swords,
Nor one of pistols, but of words)
Took place (nor can I tell you where,
Or who to light first brought the affair ;
For neither Æsop nor Fontaine
Have such a fable in their train)
Between a Spider and a Bee,
On points of art and industry.

The Spider urged, in bold defiance,
His skill in mathematic science :
Said, that no creature like himself,
Nor insect wight, nor human elf,
Knew half so much of such affairs,
Of lines and angles, rounds and squares :
His curious web must e'er impart
A specimen of matchless art :
And from himself alone it sprung ;
No foreign aid the texture hung ;

No foreign aid the means supplied
By which he wrought his darling pride :
Whereas the honey of the Bee
Was stolen from every flower and tree,
That blossom yields, or fragrant scent,
And even weeds their succour lent.

To this the Bee with warmth replied,
(For anger reign'd on either side)
That what the Spider urged as blame
Was her best praise, her highest fame :
Though thus of theft she was accused,
Had she, e'en once, her power abused ?
No flower or herb, she dared maintain,
Had ever reason to complain
Of lustre dimm'd, or fragrance lost,
Or that she flourish'd at their cost.
As to the Spider's vaunted lore
In lines and angles, and what more,
She might with safer title rest
Her merits on a nobler test ;
The order of her cells alone,
In which her art conspicuous shone.
But she had other things to name :
Who could, like her, so justly frame
The perfect hexagon ? And, then,
How useful were her works to men ?

In lowly cot, or lofty dome,
The sweetness of her honeycomb
Alike was prized ; her wax beside
Was to the wants of man applied.
Thus in comparison of skill,
The Bee must rise superior still
To him, or art was at its ebb,—
The weaver of a flimsy web.

The Spider then, with wrathful look,
That flash'd displeasure ere he spoke,
Resumed : “ How prone are stubborn fools
To scorn the wisdom of the schools !
Conceited insect, check thy pride !
Know'st thou the power thou wouldst deride ? ”

“ I know it well,” replied the Bee,
“ And, knowing, I would teach it thee :
But thou canst scan but little part
Of this profound and magic art.
To show its various ends and use,
My grandsire once descanted thus :—

“ ‘ Blest Mathematics ! noblest name
Recorded in the lists of Fame !
Thy art the faculties improves,
Strengthens the judgment, and removes
The murky veil that clouds the sense,
And chases doubts and dulness thence.

Scarce can thy wondrous powers be told !
By thee the Miser counts his gold.
By thee the Hind, that reaps and sows,
The different times and seasons knows.
Thou givest the cannon aim in war ;
Thou form'st, in peace, the ploughman's share.
How many noble engines too
Dost thou exhibit to the view !
By one, the rude and fickle wind
Is made to labour for mankind.
Another turns, where bogs abound,
The land to firm and fertile ground.
A third, to vapour gives the force
Of fifty or a hundred horse.
Thy learn'd disciple can effect
More than the poet, fancy-deck'd
Has yet conceived. Observe his plan,
To narrow kingdoms to a span !
Then see him show to human sight,
The limbs and features of a mite !
Or give to weak and purblind age,
Like youth, to read the instructive page.
He, by thy lore, a thousand years
Forward can set the starry spheres ;
Call by its name each lamp divine,
That in the azure vault doth shine ;

Can gauge the depth of every sea,
Measure the Sun, and Saturn weigh.
He farthest through the boundless space,
The great Creator's hand can trace,
And best reveal to feeble sense,
The wonders of Omnipotence.'

“ Such are the powers of this vast art !
But what's the little flimsy part
You proudly boast ? Does it conduce
To moral end, or general use ?
Do you to aught your skill apply,
Except to lure the unwary fly ?
With craft the treacherous snare you weave,
And ne'er with life your victim leave.
In this consists my worthier skill : —
For good I labour ; you, for ill :
To ruin is your art confined ;
But mine, to benefit mankind.”

FABLE XXXI.

THE BOYS AND THE FROGS.



Against Cruelty to Animals.

How grievous 'tis in youth to trace
No pity for the brutal race !
To see the joy-inspiring mind
To wanton cruelty inclined,
Seeking low pleasure to obtain
In that which gives another pain !

Though science, man's exclusive pride,
And language be to beasts denied,
The sense of feeling is acute
In them as in the *human* brute ;
And the poor worm on which we tread
Endures, immortal Shakspeare said,
In corporal sufferance, pangs as great,
As when a giant meets his fate.

Let then your sport, sweet boy, be free
From aught like inhumanity.

Ne'er misapply your opening powers,
Nor overcast your brightest hours,
By heaping woes of any nature,
Upon a weak, defenceless creature.
For he who in his early years
Can glory in a wretch's fears ;
Can hear, without concern, the cries
That from its tortured feelings rise,
Will, when to ripen'd manhood grown,
From the brute species to his own
Transfer his fatal inclination,
And live the general detestation.

The school was o'er, the evening fair ;
A hum of gladness trill'd the air,
When forth there sped a joyous crew
Their favourite pastimes to renew.

Bounding alert along the green,
At healthful cricket some were seen ;
Some raised aloft the paper kite,
Watching with eager gaze its flight ;
And there a little band appear'd —
Red handkerchiefs for streamers rear'd —
Who, with mock swords, mock battle waged,
And *French* and *English* were engaged :

While others on the smooth turf lay,
Spectators of the guiltless fray.

But not in harmless games like these
Did all their different humours please;
For some, with hearts to pity steel'd,
In play their evil bent reveal'd.
The dunces they ; — and few or none
But would their near acquaintance shun,
Who valued an unsullied name,
Or own'd a love of virtuous fame : —
Tyrants at home, poltroons at school,
All science hating, and all rule ;
In every thing but mischief dull ;
So hard the heart, so thick the skull.

Beyond the play-ground, was a lake
Too shallow e'en for duck and drake,
Where, happy in his native bog,
Dwelt many an inoffensive frog,
Who skipp'd and croak'd in sportive glee,
Not doubting his security.

But transient is the date of bliss : —
Joy totters on a precipice.

The dunces, skulking out of bound,
By chance these speckled reptiles found
Regaling in their oozy court,
And mark'd them for their next day's sport.

The school scarce o'er, with stones they haste
To lay the hapless victims waste,
Surround the pond on every side,
Vowing destruction far and wide ;
While shouts of savage joy proclaim
How well they take their deadly aim.

Alter'd is now the pleasing scene !
The sparkling eye and sprightly mien !
A father there resigns his breath ;
Here a fond mother sinks in death ;
Parents bewail their children's fates ;
Widows lament their slaughter'd mates ;
Friend is from friend and brother torn,
And life's fine thread untimely shorn !

A Frog, who view'd the carnage rife,
And trembled for his limbs and life,
The urchins' pity thus besought :
" O stay those hands with ruin fraught,
Nor wrong a timid, helpless crew,
Who ne'er have injured yours or you.
Say, thoughtless youths, can you repay
The blessings which you take away ?
Can you restore our kindred slain,
And light the vital spark again ?
Can you a sever'd limb supply,
Or animate the sightless eye ?

“Cease then : your cruel sport forbear,
And learn, in mercy learn, to spare !
For know, that while you revel thus,
What’s sport to you is death to us !”

FABLE XXXII.

THE BOY, THE CAT, AND THE YOUNG BIRDS.

*Against taking Birdsnests.*

SWEET is in Spring the mellow note
That issues from the blackbird's throat,
And sweet is every warbling lay
That makes the grove and garden gay.
But there's a joy to feeling dearer
Than tuneful concerts to the hearer ;
To mark the instinct which directs
These happy, skilful architects,
In building for their infant race
A snug, commodious dwelling place ;
To note how dexterously they snatch
The straw from off the cottage thatch,
And how laboriously convey
Dry sticks and verdant moss away ;
Then strip from off their feather'd breast
The softest down to line their nest ;
To see with what unwearied love
To distant hills and vales they rove,

And how they cull the choicest food,
To feed their tender, callow brood.

Yet there are miscreants who delight
These creatures' fondest hopes to blight ;
Who plunder every nest they find,
Then toss its fragments to the wind,
Bearing the nestlings — sad to tell —
Far from the home they loved so well ;
Where, lingering, pining, one by one
Their life expires, ere half begun.

Oh! if to any of my friends
Such wanton cruelty extends;
If there exists one heartless boy,
Who loves a birdsnest to destroy ;
I charge him, by his mother's care,
The curious edifice to spare ;
I charge him, by his sire's caress,
To spare the infant tribe, who bless
Their feather'd mates, as he imparts
Pleasure to his fond parents' hearts ;
To think, in every plaintive tone,
He hears his mother's anguish'd moan ;
In every wing that flutters by,
He views his father's agony ;
For so they 'd grieve, were life's best gem,
Their darling children, torn from them.

A Boy of this destroying taste
In Spring laid all the neighbourhood waste :
Each brake he knew, each tangled bush,
Where built the blackbird, linnet, thrush ;
Nor wall deterr'd, nor tree could foil
His desolating hand of spoil ;
Festoons of speckled eggs, well strung,
Around his room sad trophies hung,
Memorials of his dire success,
And of parental wretchedness.

One nest alone the urchin spared,
But for its young a jail prepared,
Where they the sunny fields might see,
But never taste life's liberty ;
'That precious boon, in mercy given .
To every creature under heaven,
As much their birthright to enjoy,
As his, that wicked tyrant boy.

Alas ! unhappy fluttering things,
In vain they ply their restless wings ;
In vain, with wide distended beak,
A parent's nourishment they seek ;
In vain their mournful chirps implore
The kindness they must feel no more.

Poor victims ! their disastrous fate
Was, happily, of transient date ;

For Death, their best and kindest friend,
Soon brought their sufferings to an end.

A hungry Cat, who pass'd that way,
When their young jailer was at play,
Espied with joy the helpless brood,
And, deeming them delicious food,
Pounced on the cage with talons fell,
And tore them piecemeal from their cell.

Feasted, and having done her task,
She lays her in the sun to bask ;
She licks her velvet paws, and glides
Her tongue along her tabby sides :
At length her half-shut eyes she closes,
And in delicious sleep reposes.

The youngster, being tired of play,
Returns, his prisoners to survey.
“ What means this death-like silence round ?
What mean these fragments on the ground ? ”
He cries ; and soon the truth he knows,
And sees the author of his woes.
“ The Cat, vile Cat, has seized the prey,
And with her life the wrong shall pay.”

Grimalkin just in time awoke
To shun the fierce impending stroke ;
To hear his angry, threatening speech,
And spring aloft beyond his reach.

In safety placed, with words of truth
She thus harangued the spoiler youth:

“ Suppress your rage, intemperate elf,
Or turn the vengeance on yourself!
Think, wretch, how many nests you plunder,
How many ties you rend asunder,
Without excuse, pretence, or plea,
From the mere love of cruelty !
True, on your victims I have fed,
But 'twas by nature's dictates led ;
Impell'd by hunger and by right,
To serve a craving appetite.”

FABLE XXXIII.

THE NIGHTINGALE AND FOWLER.



Against Credulity.

A NIGHTINGALE, that, unaware,
Had fallen in a Fowler's snare,
In notes of mournful strain implored
To be to liberty restored ;
And, to engage the Fowler's heart,
Promised three maxims to impart,
Which, long as should his life endure,
Would his true happiness secure.

“ The first,” exclaim'd the bird of eve,
“ Is, ‘ Be not hasty to believe,
Or, without caution duly weigh'd,
By first appearances be sway'd.’ —
The second is, ‘ Seek not to gain
That which you never can attain.’ —
And thirdly, ‘ From your memory cast
Evils whose remedy is past.’ ”

Soon as the tuneful captive ceased,
She by the Fowler was released ;

But wishing, ere she soar'd on high,
Her pupil's aptitude to try,
She cried, " Why didst thou, silly wight,
So easily permit my flight ?
Know, luckless being, to thy cost,
A precious treasure thou hast lost :
Within my body hidden lies
A diamond of enormous size,
Of which, hadst thou been once possess'd,
With affluence had thy days been bless'd."

Thus having said, away she flew :
The Fowler fail'd not to pursue.
A lengthen'd chace, and weary way,
She led him till the close of day ;
When, hopeless of the wish'd-for prize,
Tears rush'd in torrents from his eyes ;
And, sitting down, in wild despair,
He beat his breast and tore his hair,
And cursed his folly and his fate,
In accents I may not relate.

Now, hovering o'er his head, the bird
Address'd to him her parting word.

" Say, art thou not a senseless loon,
Thus wholly to forget so soon
The precepts that concern'd thy peace ?
Away ! this idle clamour cease !

Thou didst imagine — strange and new ! —
That diamonds in my body grew.
And who misled thee ? — blame not me —
Who but thy own credulity ? —
Again, thou rashly hast pursued
An animal with wings endued,
Regardless of the different nature
Of man, and of a feather'd creature ;
Or not observing, that from birth
I dwell in air, and thou on earth. —
And lastly, of all hope bereft,
Having no chance to take me left,
Yet grieved thy purpose to forego,
With floods of tears thine eyes o'erflow,
And heaves thy breast with anguish keen.
Ah ! had it not far better been
My third good maxim to believe,
Which warn'd thee never thus to grieve
At evils, whether true or feign'd,
For which no remedy remain'd !”

FABLE XXXIV.

JUPITER'S STOREHOUSE.



Every Man's Lot made lighter by Content.

A WRETCH, whose discontented mind
At fortune and at fate repined,
Who thought the gods had favour shown
To all conditions but his own,
Wearied high Heaven, from morn to night,
To change his station and his plight.

At length his prayer so urgent grew,
That Jove himself no respite knew :
But still, desirous to content him,
A messenger his godship sent him,
And summon'd him to answer straight
At his celestial Storehouse gate.

He went ; the portals open flew,
And show'd to his inquiring view
Innumerable bags, in which he found
The fortunes of mankind were bound :
They all were ranged in due degree,
And all were seal'd by Destiny.

“ Here, though thy impious complaints demand
A chastening, not indulgent hand,
If possible,” the godhead cried,
“ Thou shalt be fully satisfied.

Weigh these, and choose amongst them all
That which thou wouldst thy portion call ;
But know, to guide thy choice aright,
The happiest will be found most light,
For ’tis the evils mortals share
That are most difficult to bear.

The man his grateful thanks express’d,
And deem’d himself supremely bless’d ;
Fortune and he should now be friends,—
Upon himself his fate depends.

With stifled breath and toiling hand,
He lifts the bag of Chief Command,
Where, under pageantry’s array,
A thousand cares in ambush lay.

“ Stronger than mine,” observed the Swain,
“ His back must be, who can sustain
This cumberous load ! I’ll have it not ;
A lighter satchel be my lot.”

The second bag he now uprears
Of Statesmen and Prime Ministers.
But what with wild ambition’s fires,
Presumptuous hopes, and vain desires,

Anxiety, fatigue, dismay
At disappointments found to-day,
And fear of worse impending sorrow —
The danger of disgrace to-morrow —
So ponderous was this burthen found,
He soon replaced it on the ground :
Nor could he help exclaiming loud,
As underneath its weight he bow'd,
“ Unhappy they, amidst the throng,
To whom such galling freights belong !
Preserve me, gracious Heaven, from these,
And let me live a life of ease !”

Again from bag to bag he hied,
Another and another tried ;
A thousand and a thousand more
He poised, successful as before.
Dependence' heavy weight lay here ;
There sunk constraint and abject fear :
The sickly ill of ‘ hope deferr'd’
Added its pressure to a third.
Some were by wit's imprudence fraught,
And some by woes excess had brought.

“ Alas !” he cried, “ and is there then
No good condition found with men ?
But hold, I must no more complain ;
At length my wishes I attain ;

Here ! here's the bag that suits me best !
Lighter it feels than all the rest."

" And lighter would it be than this,
Did he who owns it know his bliss,"
Resumed the god : " his restless mind
Gives it the little weight you find."

" O grant it me," the Clown replies ;
" I'll better estimate the prize."

" Take, and enjoy it, then," said Jove,
" And let no more thy wishes rove ;
The lot thou choosest, purblind Clown,
Is, in reality, thine own !
Depart, and be instructed hence,
To rail no more at Providence."

FABLE XXXV.

THE CALIPH AND THE PERFUMED CLAY.

*On the Advantages of virtuous Association.*

A PROVERB of an ancient date,
Approved by time, and fix'd as fate,
Says, ' Evil fellowship will taint
The purest morals of a saint.'

This ancient maxim more implies, —
That converse with the good and wise
Will, in the same degree, impart
The love of virtue to the heart,
And to the youthful mind convey
A charm, will never fade away.
But maxims oft are deem'd uncouth;
Example be the test of truth.



In fair Arabia's happy clime,
Where Nature, deck'd in robe sublime,

Exhibits to the enchanted eye
The richest tints, the brightest sky,
And tempers the too ardent ray
By spicy gales, that gently play,
And from their fragrant wings dispense
A thousand odours to the sense,
A Caliph dwelt. At early day
He rose, his morning rites to pay ;
(Rites which are celebrated there
More by ablutions than by prayer)
And through a flower-bespangled path
Betook him to his favourite bath.

Deep in a grove's o'er-arching shade,
Where scarce a sun-beam might invade,
The building stood ; and lavish Art
Had nobly there sustain'd her part :
For Eastern riches and expense,
In all their proud magnificence,
Combined to make the structure quite
A fairy palace of delight.
The walls of polish'd marble shone,
Inlaid with every precious stone
Golconda's mines, or Lybia's coast,
Or Ocean's gem-fraught caves could boast ;
While in the midst, reflecting bright
Their different hues, and tinctured light,

A fountain high its columns threw,
Then broke in showers of glittering dew.

It was the custom in the East,
Instead of soap or almond paste,
When in the bath (historians say)
To use a sort of perfumed clay.

Delighted with its grateful scent,
Which rose o'er all pre-eminent,
The Caliph forth in praises broke,
And to the clay enraptured spoke.

“Delicious Clay, what charms are thine !
Or earthly art thou, or divine ?

All earthly things that please the sense,
Aloes, and myrrh, and frankincense ;
The field-flowers wild, the cultured bloom,
The classic myrtle's choice perfume,
The breath of morn, the southern breeze,
From spicy vales and balmy trees
Stealing their sweets, compared with thee,
Lose all their boasted fragranc y.

We call thee Clay ! — Dull ignorance ! —
Can clay give rapture to the sense ?

Thy origin is from above,
The Elysian groves, and bowers of Love.”

“And please your highness,” said the Clay,
Disclaiming this ecstatic lay,

“ I am indeed but common earth !
The little I can boast of worth
From good association flows ;
I came in contact with a rose,
And from its virtues rare imbibed
The odours, are to me ascribed.”

T A L E S.

THE WHISTLE.

THE mischief which so often springs
From a false estimate of things,
A Sage,* his country's boast and pride,
Has, in a tale, exemplified.

Seven summer suns had scarcely shed
Their genial influence o'er my head,
When, for some task to make amends,
Or, on some holiday, my friends,—
Matters not now on what pretence —
Had fill'd my pockets full of pence.
Away, delighted, swift I flew
To buy some plaything rare and new ;

* Dr. Benjamin Franklin, of America.

But meeting in the street a boy
Who blew a whistle for his toy,
Pleased with its sound, and young and rash,
I gave him for it all my cash.
Return'd, with wondrous self-content
Whistling through all the house I went,
Annoying every soul I found
Who came within the whistle's sound.
Brothers and sisters, aunts and cousins,
(For relatives I had by dozens,)
Hearing the bargain I had made,
Call'd me a silly, thoughtless blade;
And told me, that by folly driven,
Four times the whistle's worth I'd given.
This to my youthful fancy brought
What charming things I might have bought,
And, added to my kinsmen's jeers,
Soon changed my joy to bitter tears;
Giving me pain in greater measure,
Than e'er the whistle caused me pleasure.

This incident of trivial kind
Was deeply printed on my mind,
And afterwards became of use
My vain expenses to reduce ;
For oft, when tempted by the eye
Some needless pennyworth to buy,

I'd close my purse, and wisely say,
Don't too much for a *whistle* pay.

As in the world I upwards grew,
And men and manners met my view,
I thought I plainly could discern
A large proportion, who, in turn
By empty sounds as rashly sway'd,
Too dearly for a *whistle* paid.

When a court parasite I saw
Yielding his comfort for a straw,
His independence, virtue, friends,
To gain some selfish, worthless ends ;
This man, I've said — my usual phrase —
Too dearly for a *whistle* pays.

Or, when another I beheld,
By popular applause impell'd,
Abandoning for party strife
The useful business of his life ;
This patriot, to myself I've thought,
Too dearly hath his *whistle* bought.

When a rich miser I behold,
Who sells his life and soul for gold,
Gives up the joys of social living,
The high felicity of giving,
The bliss of friendship, the regard
Of virtuous men — no mean reward —

The pleasures of the festive board,
An useless store of wealth to hoard ;
Poor wretch ! indignantly I say,
'Too much you for your *whistle* pay.

Again, a spendthrift when I see,
Fashion's adoring votary,
Fond of fine living, horses, plate,
Squandering his ancestors' estate,
Till, ruin'd by his costly gear,
A prison ends his gay career —
Alas ! I cry, who runs may read,
His *whistle* has been dear indeed !

'Thus I conceived that half the woes
With which the cup of life o'erflows,
Were by mankind themselves call'd forth
In prizing things of little worth ;
In short, to close this long epistle,
Paying too dearly for their *whistle*.

THE PORTRAIT.



A FATHER, anxious that his son
To wisdom might be timely won,—
Meaning that wisdom from above,
That fills the soul with heavenly love,
And sheds o'er learning, manners, sense,
A sweet, endearing influence,—
Thus strove to fix the stranger guest
A constant inmate of his breast.

“ List, Edwin, while a tale I tell ;
Well known to you the original.

“ Abdallah, from his earliest year,
Was to a powerful monarch dear ;
A sovereign wise, and good, and great,
Who raised him from a low estate,
And placed him in a palace rare,
Built for his use with cost and care ;
Around it, gardens gemm'd with flowers,
And verdant lawns, and shady bowers,
And fountains glittering in the sun,
And silver lakes, and forests dun,

Combined with every various charm,
His taste to please, his heart to warm.

Nor this alone. Abdallah's lord
Supplied his favourite from his board
With every dainty luxury gave,
Or heart could wish, or palate crave ;
Invested him with high command ;
Made him the viceroy of the land ;
Allow'd him freely to repair
His gracious intercourse to share ;
To ask advice, or seek relief,
If he should err, or were in grief.

Yet for these favours, shame to say,
Abdallah's heart was cold as clay ;
Thankless he view'd the fair demesne
That own'd him master of the scene ;
His prince he treated with neglect,
No homage paid him, no respect ;
But shunn'd his converse and embrace,
And wickedly abused his grace."

"How I detest," young Edwin cried,
Deep blushing with indignant pride,
"A character so vile and rude !
A heart so lost to gratitude !
If known to me be any such,
O keep me from his baneful touch !"

“ My son, the portrait I have shown,
Though thus repulsive, is your own,”
Resumed the sire. “ E’er since your birth,
The Potentate of heaven and earth
Has, with peculiar favour, shed
A thousand blessings on your head ;
Has placed you in a world where shine
The traces of his hand divine,
Beauty, and usefulness, and ease,
All that can aid, adorn, and please ;
He in your person has combined
Such powers of body, strength of mind,
As give you full, unbounded sway
O’er all that dart their trackless way
Through ocean, or through ether’s space,
Or make the land their dwelling-place ;
And has invited you to hold
Communion with him uncontroll’d,
That in the study of his love,
Your heart might dwell with him above,
And that his bright perfections known
Might lead you to exalt your own.

Yet has your eye—your heart unmoved—
O’er all this fair creation roved,
Unconscious of the mighty hand
From which it sprung, or mind which plann’d ;

And while, her choicest table spread,
On Nature's bounties you have fed,
No warm emotion has upsprung,
Glow'd in your breast, or waked your tongue,
To pour one strain of gratitude
To Nature's God, the source of good ;
And you have shunn'd the converse high,
And slighted the all-seeing eye
Of Him, who, crown'd with endless grace,
Eternal lives, and fills all space."

THE FOUR SEASONS.

[*From the French.*]



“ I wish ’twere Winter all the year !”
Said Philip, as with swift career
He skated o’er the level ice,
And carv’d some letter, or device.
And when, returning from the lake,
He gather’d up the snow’s white flake
To form a ball, — gay, frolic elf!
Almost as big as was himself,—
“ I wish ’twere Winter all the year !”
Repeated he. — “ Come hither dear,”
His father, who had heard him, cried,
“ And to my pocket-book confide
The wish which you have just express’d.”
Philip obey’d his sire’s request ;
And with a hand that shook with cold,
And scarcely could the pencil hold,
He wrote, in lines not very clear,
“ I wish ’twere Winter all the year !”

Winter had pass'd, and Spring arrived;
The face of Nature now revived;
The trees with verdure graced the scene,
And lambkins sported on the green.
Philip was by his father led
To view the garden's flowery bed,
Where, in the splendour of their bloom,
And breathing exquisite perfume,
Jonquils and hyacinths combined
With spring flowers of each different kind,
To fill with sweets the ambient air,
And decorate the gay parterre.

Delighted was the sprightly boy;
He scarcely could contain his joy,
As, like the bee, from flower to flower
He roved, their fragrance to devour,
Admired their freshness, gemm'd with dew,
And praised the beauty of their hue.

"These are the produce of the Spring,"
The father said: "the sweets they bring
Are rich, and brilliant tints they boast,
But transient is their date, at most;
Their bloom and fragrance soon are past."
"Ah! if the Spring would always last!"
Cried Philip, as with youthful grace
He ran, a butterfly to chase.

“ Be kind enough, my dearest child,”
Again the father said, and smiled,
“ Within my pocket-book to note
Your present wish.” And Philip wrote,
His heart with pleasure beating fast,
“ Ah ! if the Spring would always last !”

The Spring to Summer now gave way,
And Philip, on a lovely day,
Was, with his father, asked to meet
A party, at a rural treat.
Their road through waving corn fields lay,
And meadows sweet with new mown hay,
Where lads and lasses blithely sang,
While echoing vales responsive rang,
As o’er the field the mirthful crew
The fragrant spoil around them threw.

At length they reach’d the pleasant bower,
Inwove with many a blooming flower,
Where, crown’d with frolic and with sport,
The donor held his festive court.

A table, in the centre placed,
With various summer fruits was graced :
Strawberries and cherries, what a load !
Of cream a rich abundance flow’d ;
Raspberries and currants, red and white,
Made Philip’s eye with pleasure bright ;

Choice cakes, of every sort and size
That pastry-cook could well devise,
Were likewise in profusion stored,
And lent their aid to deck the board.

The party having well regaled,
Games and amusements next prevail'd :
A spacious garden, where there play'd
A band of music in the shade,
Invited all the youthful throng
To trip the mazy dance along ;
And when the near approach of eve
Summon'd the guests to take their leave,
E'en their adieu, that doleful sound !—
With a huge syllabub was crown'd.

As homeward Philip bent his way,
And talk'd with rapture of the day,
“ Is it not,” said his father, “ true
That Summer boasts its pleasures too ?”

“ O yes !” cried Philip, with a bound,
“ I wish 'twould last the whole year round !”

Again the pocket-book was cited,
And Philip his third wish indited.

The Autumn came. A fresher breeze
Waved the rich foliage of the trees ;
Mild, but invigorating rays,
Succeeded Summer's scorching blaze ;

The vines, that o'er the trellis stray'd,
In purple clusters were array'd;
Melons, reposing on their bed,
Around delicious odours shed;
The juicy plum, the luscious pear,
The blushing apple, wall-fruit rare,
Bent, with their weight, almost to earth
The parent-stock that gave them birth.

Young Philip's cheek with transport glow'd,
As he survey'd each tempting load;
And loud he laugh'd, as on his head
His father shower'd the pippins red.

"O what nice fruits," the urchin cried,
"Invite my taste on every side!
What varied tints the woods display!
And what a cool, delightful day!"

"This is the Autumn," said the sire,
"A season you may well admire,
When every bough is gemm'd with fruit,
And Nature wears her richest suit.
Seize, then, my boy, the present hour,
Ere the fine days have lost their power;
For Winter, with his frozen train,
Advances swiftly o'er the plain,—
Soon will its icy reign commence,
And drive the fruitful Autumn hence."

“ Ah !” cried the ever joyous youth,
“ I should be very glad in truth,
If Winter would its progress stay,
And Autumn never go away !”

“ Philip, you jest,” his sire rejoined,
“ This surely cannot be your mind !
My pocket-book, I think, records
Wishes express’d in different words.
Pray read, my boy, what’s written here :

‘ *I wish ’twere Winter all the year !*—
Your eye a little farther cast —

‘ *Ah if the Spring would always last !*
And what on Summer is there found ?

‘ *I wish ’twould last the whole year round !*
Now tell me, Philip, if you please,
Whose hand it was that wrote all these ?”

“ ’Twas mine, papa.”—Resumed the sire,
“ And what just now did you desire ?”

“ *That Winter would its progress stay,
And Autumn never go away !*”

“ Curious enough,” the father said :

“ When his white mantle Winter spread,
You wish’d (the cold was most severe)
That it were Winter all the year !

When Spring, in primrose vest array’d,
Came tripping through the verdant glade,

And scatter'd flowers where'er she pass'd,
You wish'd the Spring would always last !
When more luxuriant Summer came,
With early fruits, and robe of flame ;
Her brows with full blown roses crown'd,
You wish'd 'twould last the whole year round.
And now, when Autumn, nut-brown queen,
With richer tints adorns the scene,
And studs with fairer fruits the spray,
You wish she ne'er would go away !
Philip, be you the interpreter,
And tell me what you hence infer."

" I now," said Philip, " can discern,
That all are excellent in turn."

" Yes, my dear boy, the seasons round
In riches and delights abound ;
And God alone, the great First Cause,
Who to the year prescribes its laws,
Has always, by his high behest,
Known how to govern Nature best.

" Had it with you last Winter rested,
With endless snows had been invested,
And wrapp'd in one eternal frost
This beauteous scene, like gold emboss'd ;
The buds of Spring had ne'er appear'd,
Nor Summer had its blossoms rear'd ;

Your pleasures would have been confined
Midst deserts bleak, and piercing wind,
Your skill upon the ice to show,
Or tracing figures in the snow.
By this arrangement, what a host
Of rich enjoyments you had lost !

“ Happy, my child, it is for man,
That nature’s wise, stupendous plan
Is not in mortal power or state,
To guide, control, or regulate.
Few joys our earthly days would gild,
Were our rash wishes all fulfill’d.”

THE THREE SISTERS.

A FAIRY TALE.



THAT beauty's pleasing all confess,
And riches powerful charms possess ;
But what are these compared to sense,
To heavenly born intelligence,
To learning, wisdom, wit combined,
Which form that faculty — the MIND ?

Yes, beauty is a lovely toy,
If beauty shine without alloy ;
But to ensure our admiration,
It must be free from affectation,
Must give itself no airs and graces,
Nor lord it over plainer faces.

And wealth's a very charming thing :
What rare delights from affluence spring !
But if to selfishness allied,
It only serves to feed our pride,
Or avarice usurp the place
Which warm benevolence should grace, —

Riches so ill applied, my verse
Proclaims no blessing, but a curse.

And even learning, wit, and sense,
Lose all their claims to excellence,
If learning, pedantry unites,
If wit, regardless whom it smites,
Deals with unsparing hand around
Its sallies, not to please, but wound ;
If sense, a proud conceited elf,
Deems none so knowing as itself,
And levels against every creature
The shafts of satire and ill-nature.
As soon shall ignorance be approved,
As the vile satirist be loved.

Julia, a young and sprightly dame,
For early talents gain'd a name :
No task was hard, no lesson tired,
Whate'er she chose, she soon acquired ;
She danced with grace, with skill she play'd,
The envy of each duller maid ;
To nature true, with spirit plann'd,
The landscape rose beneath her hand ;
Her wit was ready, shrewd, and free,
And who so quick at repartee ?

Yet gifted with such powers as these,
Julia was seldom known to please :
Her pride and arrogance were great ;
Disgusting was her self-conceit :
A haughty, dictatorial tone
Throughout her conversation shone :
Her satire held unbounded rule,
Converting all to ridicule ;
Nor friend nor foe could e'er escape
Her lash, in some sarcastic shape :
Obvious to all her faults appear'd,
And made her less beloved than fear'd.

Flora, in person far from plain,
Became of youth and beauty vain ;
Mind she regarded less than looks,
And studied dress much more than books.

Louisa, cast in sordid mould,
Had fix'd her youthful heart on gold :
Her presents were securely stored,
That none might share her little hoard.

One winter night, engaged in chat,
Around the fire these sisters sat ;
On various topics they conversed,
A thousand future plans rehearsed,
And rapidly the moments flew,
As high in air their castles grew.

“ O how I wish,” young Flora cries,
As on the glass she fix’d her eyes,
“ That we had lived in former times,
Or in the famed Arabian climes,
When fairies came at every call,
To grant our wishes, or forestall !” —

“ Suppose,” said Julia with a sneer,
“ A generous fairy should appear,
And grant you all your heart’s desire,
Pray, Madam, what would you require ?”

Said Flora, “ I would straight request
With perfect beauty to be bless’d ;
That Helen’s charms and Hebe’s grace,
Might to my brighter bloom give place,
And thousand lovers I’d enchain,
To dance attendance in my train.”

“ Though beauty might awhile allure,
What, wanting wealth, would this procure ?”
Louisa said : “ My wish should be
An independence full and free ;
Not transient charms, but solid gold,
To purchase benefits untold ;
Jewels superb, and costly plate,
A splendid house, a large estate :
Just such a purse I would request
As Fortunatus once possess’d.”

“Wishes so frivolous and blind
Betray the weakness of the mind,”
Said Julia; “I more sense would show,
And beg the fairy to bestow
Some mental gift; I would aspire
Greater self-knowledge to acquire,
And scorning beauty, scorning pelf,
Increase the approval of myself.”—

The sisters smile, for well they deem
Julia not poor in self-esteem.

Late grew the hour: “Good night!” “Adieu!”
Each to her chamber now withdrew.

Scarcely were Julia’s curtains closed,
Scarcely herself in bed composed,
Than, suddenly, a radiant light,
Strong as the sun’s at mid-day height,
Her chamber fill’d. From bed she sprang,
In great alarm her bell she rang;
“Fire! fire! help! help!” she wildly cried.
“Be calm,” a dulcet voice replied;
“Dismiss your fears, your tremor still,
I come your wishes to fulfil.”

Her trembling eyelids Julia raised,
And lost her terror as she gazed.

Within a brilliant, crystal car,
More dazzling than the morning star,

O'er which a thousand gems were strown,
That with resplendent lustre shone,
A Fairy sat. Her golden hair
Was bound with wreaths of amaranth rare ;
Her eyes celestial brightness beam'd ;
Her cheeks like new-blown roses seem'd ;
A diamond zone engirt her waist,
And symmetry her person graced :
Sweetly she smiled ; she waved her hand ;
Before her all the sisters stand.

“ You, Flora, have for beauty sigh'd ;
I bring twelve tablets for your guide :
These figures carefully survey,
Twelve perfect models they portray ;
Your favourite style from these select,
And be with equal beauty deck'd.”

“ Bright being,” cried the enraptured maid,
“ Before your charms all others fade ;
Forgive my arrogant desire,
And let me to your own aspire !” —

“ Receive your wish,” the Fairy said,
And touch'd her lightly on the head.
Such power the magic wand possess'd,
That Flora stood at once confess'd
As dazzling bright, as wondrous fair
As the queen goddess of the air.

“ Flora, with you I now dispense ; —
A carriage waits to take you hence.”

“ I see,” thought Julia, ever prone
Each generous feeling to disown,
“ Why Flora is dismiss’d so soon ;
The Fairy, though she grants the boon,
Beholds with ill-conceal’d alarms
A rival in my sister’s charms.”

Again the Fairy silence broke, —
Her voice was music when she spoke .

“ This magic ring, Louisa, take,
(On wealth your happiness you stake)
Rub it, a golden dust appears,
Which this peculiar virtue bears,
That every coin it will produce
In foreign or domestic use.
Thus, wheresoe’er your course you bend,
Sure affluence shall your steps attend.
You now may go.” The Fairy ceased ;
In all the splendour of the East,
Rich as some high-born Indian maid,
The young Louisa stood array’d.

“ I beg, Louisa,” Julia cried,
Who still found something to deride,
“ That while along the room you pass,
Yourself you’d view in yonder glass ;

For little can you ween, I guess,
How ill your person suits your dress !”

To Julia now the Fairy turn'd :

“ For you is most my heart concern'd.
'This box receive, whose value lies,
Not in rich gems, or gaudy dyes,
But in a glass of curious kind,
A crystal mirror for the mind.
Satire within your youthful breast
Has reign'd a fondly cherish'd guest,
And caused you, whether friends or foes,
The faults of others to expose.
This glass, by virtue of my art,
Will faithfully your own impart.
Oft to this talisman refer, —
Truth 's its distinguish'd character.”

The beauteous Fairy disappear'd ;
No more her silver tones were heard ;
And Julia long'd for dawn of day,
Her mental treasure to survey.

The morning beam'd ; but who can tell
What pangs to Julia's portion fell ;
The crystal mirror when she view'd,
And read the word *Ingratitude* !

Long did she ponder o'er the intent,
Long wonder what the Fairy meant ;

At last the painful cause she traced,
And closed the magic box in haste ;
Her cheek with conscious shame suffused,
Remembering that her heart accused
The Fairy of unjust alarms,
Mean jealousy of mortal charms,
And not one grateful thought or word
Had own'd the favours she conferr'd.

Aside the mirror now was thrown,
An object of disgust alone ;
And Julia vow'd its degradation,
Till more secure of approbation.

Some time elapsed ; the morn was fair, —
Forth Julia walk'd to take the air,
And through the village as she pass'd,
A matron of no common cast,
Who claim'd respect, though mean and poor,
Sat spinning at her cottage door.

Invited by her aspect mild,
Julia in chat an hour beguiled,
And question'd much the reverend dame
Of former days, and youthful fame.

At parting, Julia had prepared
A shilling for the dame's reward,
But seeing, by a casual glance,
A neighbouring gentleman advance,

She slid the shilling gently down,
And changed the gift to half-a-crown.

The mirror now with pride she seized,
But ah ! once more to be displeased ;
For when the magic lid she raised,
Expecting to be highly praised,
Her fond illusion vanish'd quite,
And *Ostentation* met her sight.

One day, some guests at table met ;
The dinner past, dessert was set,
And Julia quickly found a way
Her depth of reading to display.
From Greece to Rome she travell'd fast,
From Rome to other cities pass'd ;
She quoted works of ancient lore,
Then modern authors canvass'd o'er ;
Poems and novels she discuss'd,
In politics opinions thrust,
And, bidding maiden shame defiance,
E'en dared to argue points of science.

The guests departed ; Julia ran
To search her fairy talisman,
Assured the mirror would dispense
Praise of her wit and eloquence.
The sight her confidence destroys, —
She read, *You stunn'd them with your noise.*

What deep chagrin poor Julia felt,
What frequent blame the mirror dealt,
Were I, in verse or prose, to tell,
My tale would to a volume swell.
Suffice it, that in every case
The mirror fell in sad disgrace,
For weeks and months was disregarded,
And wholly, in the end, discarded.

At last, revolving e'er in thought
What little good the gift had brought,
"I wonder," to herself she said,
"How Flora's fairy gift has sped!"

Soon as the wish was form'd, the maid,
By magic art or spell convey'd,
Was left, to learn her sister's doom,
In hapless Flora's dressing room.

Hapless indeed! for who can trace
A faded beauty's hopeless case,
When time, with slow, but withering palm,
Steals from her lips their roseate balm,
Despoils her cheek of Nature's dye,
And dims the lustre of her dye;
Or dissipation's swifter rage
Stamps her fair prime with early age!

Such Flora was; and Julia found her,
With paints and washes spread around her,

Vainly exerting all her care
Her injured beauty to repair.

Julia, o'erwhelm'd with anguish keen,
Beheld her sister's alter'd mien,
And, wondering at a fate so strange,
Inquired the reason of the change.

“ Alas !” and deeply Flora sigh'd,
“ Alas ! my sister,” she replied,
“ Beauty, too plainly as you see,
Has only proved a bane to me.
Like the gay tulip, for awhile,
I bask'd in admiration's smile,
But wanting merit's sweet perfume,
Neglect became my early doom.
Vain of superior charms, my pride
Soon chased my sisters from my side,
And while by these I lived despised,
By men as lightly was I prized.
Though hourly now my charms decay,
Yet is my study, day by day,
My faded beauty to restore,
And hide the ruin I deplore.
Oh, Julia ! in my rash desire,
Superior beauty to acquire,
I had forgot that virtue's bloom
Alone exists beyond the tomb ;

Forgot to cultivate my mind,
And fail'd one captive heart to bind !”

While Flora thus her folly mourn'd,
And Julia sigh for sigh return'd,
“ Flora,” she cried, “ my bosom bleeds,
To find your gift so ill succeeds ;
I wish Louisa's may confer
More solid happiness on her.”

Julia, on making this remark,
Was wafted to a spacious park,
Where, on a broad lake's “ margent green,”
Louisa pensively was seen.
While thus absorb'd, like one who slept,
Julia behind her softly crept,
Where, as unnoticed she remain'd,
The sad Louisa thus complain'd :—

“ Too late,” she cried, with faltering voice,
“ I see the folly of my choice !
Too late, alas ! too late I know
That riches cannot bliss bestow !
Deceitful ring, with mischief fraught,
To me what misery hast thou brought !”

This said, her cheeks with tears ran o'er,
And from her hand the ring she tore :
Julia, whose heart with pain was wrung,
With great emotion forward sprung,

And threw, her sister's grief to check,
Her arms around Louisa's neck.
Louisa started, and the spring
Shook from her trembling hand the ring,
Which fell, ere either sister spake,
Beyond redemption in the lake.

“ And is it gone ? for ever lost ?
Ah ! ne'er dear Julia, to my cost,
Its proper value did I know,
Till forced its blessings to forego.
I, selfish wretch, alone intent
My own enjoyments to augment,
Forgot that bliss of higher date,
To succour the unfortunate.
Building to building, land to land
I added with unsparing hand,
But pass'd the helpless orphan by,
Nor stopp'd to wipe the widow's eye.
Ah me ! how poor in every sense,
Is wealth without benevolence !
How mean are grandeur, pomp, and pride,
When not by virtue dignified !
You, Julia, whose superior mind
Each frivolous desire declined,
Have found, I trust, from sorrow free,
The happiness denied to me.”

Julia in silence hung her head,
And tears of deep compunction shed;
For now too plainly she descried
She had abused her mental guide,
By not endeavouring to subdue
The failings it exposed to view.
Ne'er had the mirror been consulted,
Save when with pride her heart exulted;
Ne'er had she sought her mind to im-
prove,
Unless to gratify self-love.
Resolved her conduct to amend,
And hail the mirror as her friend,
She search'd her pocket o'er and o'er,
But found the monitor no more!
At this she gave a piercing scream,—
It woke her from her fairy dream,
Which furnished, scarcely need I say,
Full converse through the following day.
In Julia's dream each youthful maid
Saw her own character portray'd,
And prudently resolved to take
A lesson from the truths it spake.
Of vanity was Flora cured;
Louisa selfishness abjured;

And to conceit no more allied,
From satire free, exempt from pride,
Julia, with every grace that decks,
Became the model of her sex.

FINIS.







